Ethel Morton's Holidays

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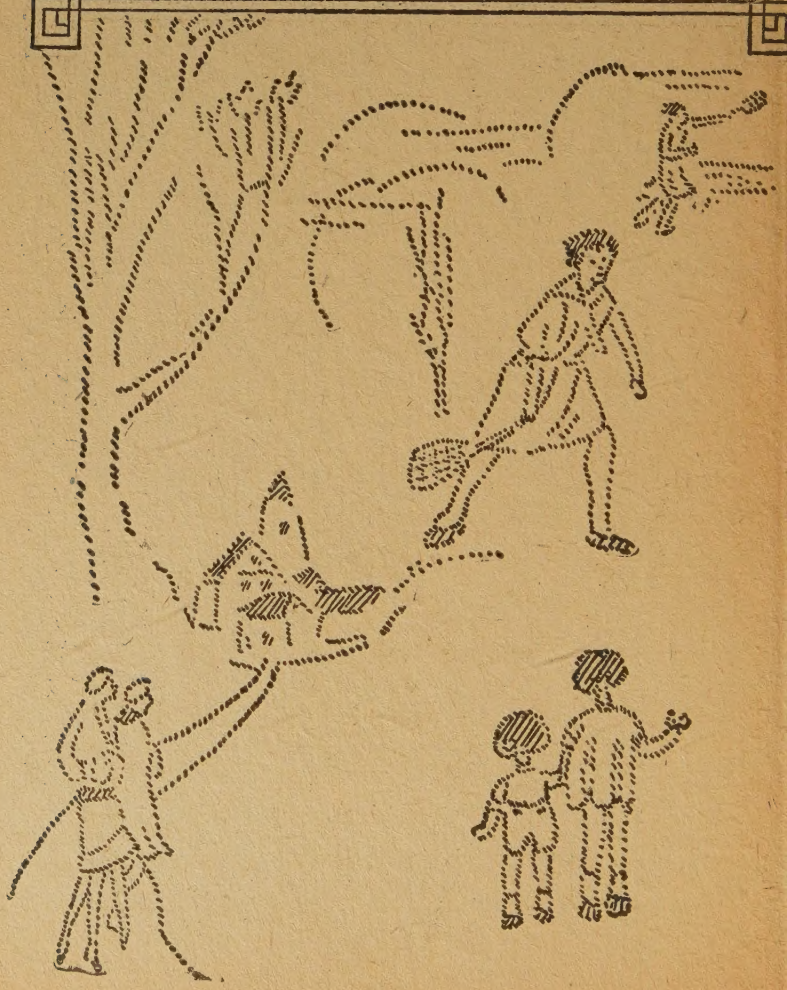

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO .....

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ETHEL MORTON'S HOLIDAYS

THE GIRLS MADE CANDIES AND COOKIES FOR EVERYBODY

Juvenile Library
Girls Series

ETHEL MORTON'S HOLIDAYS

BY

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ETHEL MORTON'S HOLIDAYS

CHAPTER I

PREPARATIONS

THE big brown automobile gave three honks as it swung around the corner from Church Street. Roger Morton, raking leaves in the yard beside his house, threw down his rake and vaulted over the gate.

"Good afternoon, sir," he called to his grandfather, saluting, soldier fashion.

"Good afternoon, son. I stopped to tell you that those pumpkins are ready for you. If you'll hop in now we can go out and get them and I'll bring you back again."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Roger. "I'll tell Mother I'm going. She may have some message for Grandmother," and he vaulted back over the gate and dashed up the steps.

In a minute he was out again and climbing into the car.

"Where are the girls this afternoon?" inquired Mr. Emerson, as he threw in the clutch and started toward the outskirts of Rosemont where he had land enough to allow him to do a little farming.

"Helen and Ethel Brown have gone to the West Woods," replied Roger, accounting for his sisters. "Somebody told them that there was a wild grapevine there that still had yellow leaves bright enough for them to use for decorating tomorrow evening."

"I should be afraid last night's frost would have shriveled them. What are Ethel Blue and Dorothy up to?" asked Mr. Emerson.

Ethel Blue was Roger's cousin who had lived with the Mortons since her babyhood. Dorothy Smith was also his cousin. She and her mother lived in a cottage on Church Street.

"They must be over at Dorothy's working up schemes for tomorrow," Roger answered his grandfather's question. "I haven't seen them since luncheon."

"How many do you expect at your party?"

"Just two or three more besides the United Service Club. James Hancock won't be able to come, though. His leg isn't well enough yet."

"Pretty bad break?"

"He says it's bad enough to make him remember not to cut corners when he's driving a car. Any break is too bad in my humble opinion."

"In mine, too. How many in the Club? Ten?"

"Ten; yes, sir. There'll be nine of us tomorrow evening—Helen and the Ethels and Dorothy and Dicky and the two Watkinses and Margaret Hancock. She's going to spend the night with Dorothy."

"Anybody from school?"

"George Foster, the fellow who danced the minuet so well in our show; and Dr. Edward Watkins is coming out with Tom and Della."

"Isn't he rather old to come to a kids' party?"

"Of course he's loads older than we are—he's twenty-five—but he said he hadn't been to a Hallowe'en party for so long that he wanted to come, and Tom and Della said he put up such a plaintive wail that they asked if they might bring him."

"I suspect he hasn't forgotten how to play," chuckled Grandfather Emerson, speeding up as they entered the long, open stretch of road that ended almost at his own door. "Any idea what you're going to do?"

"Not much. Helen and Ethel Brown are the decoration committee and I'm the jack-o'-lantern committee, as you know, and Ethel Blue and Dorothy are thinking up things to do and we're all going to add suggestions. I think the girls had a note

from Della this morning with an idea of some sort in it."

"You ought to get Burns's poem."

"On Hallowe'en?"

"We'll look it up when we get to the house. You may find some 'doings' you haven't heard of that you can revive for the occasion."

"We decided that whatever we did do, there were certain stunts we wouldn't do."

"Namely?"

"Swap signs and take off gates and brilliant jokes of that sort."

"As a Service Club you couldn't very well crack jokes whose point lies in some one's discomfort, could you?"

"Those things have looked like dog mean tricks to me and not jokes at all ever since I saw an old woman at the upper end of Main Street trying to hang her gate last year the day after Hallowe'en."

"Too heavy for her?"

"I should say so. She couldn't do anything with it. I offered to help her, and she said, 'You might as well, for I suppose you had the fun of unhanging it last night'."

"A false accusation, I suppose."

"It happened to be that time, but I had done it before," confessed Roger, flushing.

"You never happened to see the result of it before."

"That's it. I just thought of the people's surprise when they waked up in the morning and found their gates gone. I never thought at all of the real pain and discomfort that it may have given a lot of them." pay for it."

"Your Club may be doing a good service to all Rosemont if it proves that young people can have a good time without making the 'innocent bystander'

"We're going to prove it; to ourselves, anyway," insisted Roger stoutly, as he leaped out of the car and took his grandfather's parcels into the house.

"The pumpkins are in the barn," Mr. Emerson called after him. "Go down there and pick them out when you've given those bundles to your grandmother."

The big yellow globes were loaded into the car—half a dozen of them—and Mr. Emerson drove back to the house. As he stopped at the side porch for a last word with his wife he gave a cry of recognition.

"Look who comes here!" he exclaimed.

"Helen and Ethel Brown," guessed Roger. "Don't they look like those soldiers we read about in 'Macbeth'—the fellows who marched along holding boughs in their hands so that it looked as if Birnamwood had come to Dunsinane."

"Roger is quoting Shakespeare about your personal appearance," laughed Mr. Emerson as he and his grandson relieved the girls of their burdens.

They sank down on the steps of the porch and panted.

"You're tired out," exclaimed their grandmother. "Roger, bring out that pitcher of lemonade you'll find in the dining-room. How far have you walked?"

"About a thousand miles, I should say," declared Helen. "We were bound we'd get out-of-door decorations if they were to be had, and they weren't to be had except by hunting."

"You're like me—I like to use out-of-door things as late as I can; there are so many months when you have to go to the greenhouse or to draw on your house plants."

"Ethel Blue and Dorothy have been educating the Club artistically. They've been pointing out how much color there is in the fields and the woods even after the bright autumn colors have gone by."

"That's quite true. Look at that meadow."

Mrs. Emerson waved her hand at the field across the road. On it sedges were waving, softly brown; tufts of mouse-gray goldenrod nodded before the breeze; chestnut-hued cat-tails stood guard in thick ranks, and a delicate Indian Summer haze blended all into a harmony of warm, dull shades.

"You found your grapevine," said Roger, pouring the lemonade for his weary sisters, and nodding toward a trail of handsome leaves, splendidly yellow.

"It took a hunt, though. What are you doing over here?"

"Getting the pumpkins Grandfather promised us."

"You're just in time to have a ride home," said Mr. Emerson.

"You're in no hurry, Father; let the girls rest a while," urged Mrs. Emerson. "Can't you make a jack-o'-lantern while you're waiting, Roger?"

"Yes, *ma'am*, I can turn you out a truly superior article in a wonderfully short time," bragged Roger.

"He really does make them very well," confirmed Helen, "but it's because he always has the benefit of our valuable advice."

"Here you are to give it if I need it," said Roger good naturedly. "We'll show Grandmother what our united efforts can do."

So the girls leaned back comfortably against the pillars at the sides of the steps and Mrs. Emerson sat in an arm chair at the top of the flight and Mr. Emerson sat in the car at the foot of the steps and Roger began his work.

"It'll be a wonder if I make anything but a failure with so many bosses," he complained.

"Keep your hand steady, old man," teased his grandfather. "Don't let your knife go through the side or you'll let out a crack of light where you don't mean to."

"Be sure your knife doesn't slip and cut your fingers," advised Mrs. Emerson.

"Save me the inside," begged Ethel Brown. "I'm going to try to make a pumpkin pie."

"Save the top for a hat," laughed Helen. "I'll trim it with brown ribbon and set a new style at school."

Roger dug away industriously under the spur of these remarks.

"Is this the first year you've had a Hallowe'en party?" Mrs. Emerson asked.

"We used to do a few little things when we were children," Helen answered; "but for the last few years we've been asked somewhere."

"And with all due respect to our hosts we did a lot of the stupidest and meanest things we ever got let in for," declared Roger. "I was telling Grandfather about some of them coming over."

"So we made up our minds that we'd celebrate as a club this year, and do whatever we wanted to. There's a lot more to a party than just the party," said Ethel Brown wisely.

Her grandmother nodded.

"You're right. The preparation is half the fun," she agreed. "And it's fun to have every part of it perfect—the decorations and the refreshments as well as whatever it is you do for your main amusement."

"That's what I think," said Helen. "I like to think that the house is going to be appropriately dressed for our Hallowe'en party just as much as we ourselves."

"Why doesn't your club give a series of holiday parties?" suggested Grandfather. "Make each one of them a really appropriate celebration and not just an ordinary party hung on the holiday as an excuse peg. I believe you could have some interesting times

and do some good, too, so that it could honestly be brought within the scope of your Club's activities."

"We seem to have made a start at it without thinking much about it," said Roger. "The Club had a float, you know, in the Labor Day procession."

"I didn't know that!" exclaimed Mrs. Emerson.

"You were in New York for a day or two. Grandfather supplied the float! Why, we had just come back from Chautauqua a day or two before Labor Day, you know, and the first thing that happened was that a collector called to get a contribution from Mother to help out the Labor Day procession. I was there and I said I didn't believe in taxation without representation. He laughed and said, 'All right, come on. We'd be glad to have you in the procession'."

"You were rather disconcerted at that, I suspect," laughed Mrs. Emerson.

"Yes, I was, but I hated to take back water, so I said that I belonged to a club and that I supposed he was going to have all the clubs in Rosemont represented in some way. He said that was just what they wanted. They wanted every activity in the town to be shown in some shape or other."

"There wasn't time to call a meeting of the club," Helen took up the story, "so Roger and I came over and talked with Grandfather, and he lent us a hay rack and we dressed it up with boughs and got the carpenters to make some very large cut out letters—U. S. C.—two sets of them, so they could be read on both sides. They were painted white and stood up high among the green stuff and really looked very pretty. Everybody asked what it meant."

"I think it helped a lot when I went about asking for gifts for the Christmas Ship," said Roger. "Lots of people said, 'Oh, it's your club that had a float in the Labor Day parade'."

"If we should work up Grandfather's idea we might have a parade of our own another year," said Helen.

"Always co-operate with what already exists, if it's worthy," advised Mr. Emerson. "Don't get up opposition affairs unless there's a good reason for doing it."

"As there is for our Hallowe'en party," insisted Roger.

"I believe you're right there. There's no reason why you should enter into 'fool stunts' that are just 'fool stunts,' not worth while in any way and not even funny."

"We'd better move on now if Grandfather is to take us over and get back in time for his own dinner," said Roger.

"Come, girls, can you pile in all that shrubbery without breaking it? Put the pumpkins on the bottom of the car, Roger, and the jacks on top of them. Now be careful where you put your feet. Back in half an hour, Mother," and he started off with his laughing car load.

CHAPTER II

HALLOWE'EN

"YOU'RE as good as gold to come out and help these youngsters enjoy themselves," was Mrs. Morton's greeting to Edward Watkins when he appeared in the evening with Tom and Della.

"It's they who are as good as gold to let me come," he returned, smiling pleasantly. He was a handsome young man of about twenty-five, a doctor whose profession, as yet, did not make serious inroads on his time. "What are these people going to make us do first," he wondered as Roger began a distribution of colored bands.

"These are to tie your eyes with," he explained: "Yellow, you see; Hallowe'en color. The girls insist on my explaining all their fine points for fear they won't be appreciated," he said to the doctor.

"Quite right. I never should have thought about the color."

"Mother, this is George Foster," said Helen, welcoming a tall boy who was not a member of the U. S. C. but who had helped at the Club entertainment by taking part in the minuet. He shook hands with Mrs. Morton and Mrs. Smith and then submitted to having his eyes bandaged. He was followed by Gregory Patton, another high school lad, and to the great joy of everybody, James, after all, came on his crutches with Margaret.

"Now, then, my blindfolded friends," said Roger, "Grandfather tells me that it is the custom in Scotland where fairies and witches are very abundant, for the ceremony that we are about to perform to open every Hallowe'en party. He has it direct from Bobby Burns."

"Then it's right," came a smothered voice from beneath James' bandage.

"James is of Scottish descent and he confirms this statement, so we can go ahead and be perfectly sure that we're doing the correct thing. Of course, we all want to know the future and particularly whatever we can about the person we're going to marry, so that's what we're going to try to find out at the very start off."

"Take off my bandage," cried Dicky. "I know the perthon I'm going to marry."

A shout of laughter greeted this assertion from the six-year-old.

"Who is it, Dicky?" asked Helen, her arm around his shoulders.

"I'm going to marry Mary," he asserted stoutly.

There was a renewed peal at this, and Roger went on with his instructions.

"I'll lead you two by two to the kitchen door and then you'll go down the flight of steps and straight ahead for anywhere from ten to twenty steps. That will land you right in the middle of what the frost has left of the Morton garden. When you get there you'll 'pull kale'."

"Meaning?" inquired George Foster.

"Meaning that you'll feel about until you find a stalk of cabbage and pull it up."

"I don't like cabbage," complained Tom Watkins.

"You'll like this because it will give you a lot of information. If it's long or short or fat or thin your future husband or wife will correspond to it."

"That's the most unromantic thing I ever heard," exclaimed Margaret Hancock. "I certainly hope my future husband won't be as fat as a cabbage!"

"You can tell how great a fortune he's going to have—or she—by the amount of earth that clings to the stem."

"Watch me pull mine so g-e-n-t-l-y that not a grain of sand slips off," said Tom.

"If you've got courage enough to bite the stem you can find out with perfect accuracy whether your beloved will have a sweet disposition or the opposite."

"In any case he'd have a disposition like a cabbage," insisted Margaret, who did not like cabbage any more than Tom did.

"Ready?" Roger marshalled his little army. "Two by two. Doctor and Ethel Blue, Tom and Dorothy, James and Helen, George and Ethel Brown, Gregory and Margaret. Come on, Della," and he led the way through the kitchen where Mary and the cook were hugely entertained by the procession.

With cries and stumbling they went forth into the cabbage patch, where they all possessed themselves of stalks which they straightway brought in to the light of the jack-o'-lanterns to interpret.

"My lady love will be tall and slender—not to say thin," began Dr. Watkins. "I see no information here as to the color of her hair and eyes. Fate cruelly witholds these important facts. I regret to say that I wooed her so vigorously that I shook off any gold-pieces she may have had clinging about her so I can only be sure of the golden quality of her character which I have just discovered by biting it."

Amid general laughter they all began to read their fortunes. Tom announced that his beloved was so thin that she was really a candidate for the attentions of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and that he couldn't find out anything about her character because there wasn't enough of her to bite.

Margaret had pulled a stalk that fulfilled all her expectations as to size, for it was so short and fat that she could see no relation between it and anything human and threw it out of the window in dis-

gust. The rest found themselves fitted out with a variety of possibilities.

"There doesn't seem to be a real tearing beauty among them all," sighed Roger. "That's what I'd set my heart on."

"What do you expect from a cabbage?" demanded Margaret scornfully.

"I want to know whether I'm going to marry a bachelor or a widower or not marry at all," cried Helen. "Let's try the 'three luggies' next."

"First cabbages, then 'luggies'," said Della "What are 'luggies'?"

"'Luggies' are saucers," explained Helen, while James brought a small table and Ethel Brown arranged three saucers upon it. "In one of them I put clear water, in another one, sandy water, and nothing at all in the third. Anybody ready to try? Come, Della"

Della came forward briskly, but hesitated when she found that she must be blindfolded.

"There isn't any trick about it?" she asked suspiciously. "I shouldn't like to have anything happen to that saucer of sandy water."

"It won't touch anything but your finger tips, and perhaps not those," Helen reassured her. "What you are to do is to dip the fingers of your left hand into one of these saucers. If it proves to be the one with the clear water you'll marry a bachelor; if it's the sandy one he'll be a widower, and if it's the empty one you'll be a spinster to your dying day."

"You have three tries," cried Ethel Blue, "and the saucers are changed after each trial, so you have to touch the same one twice to be sure you really know your fate. Are you ready?"

"I'm ready," and Della bravely though cautiously dipped the finger tips of her left hand into the bowl of sandy water.

A cheer greeted this result.

"A widower, a widower," they all cried.

Helen changed the position of the saucers and Della made another trial. This time the Fates booked her as a spinster.

"That's the least trouble of anything," decided roly poly Della who took life carelessly.

A third attempt proved that a widower was to be her future helpmate, for her fingers went into the sandy saucer for a second time.

"I only hope he won't be an oldy old widower," said Della thoughtfully. "I couldn't bear to think of marrying any one as old as Edward."

"I'll thank you to take notice that I haven't got a foot in the grave just yet, young woman," retorted her brother.

While some of the others tried their fate by the saucer method, the rest endeavored to learn their future occupations by means of pouring melted lead through the handle of a key. Roger brought in a tiny kettle of lead from the kitchen where Mary had heated it for them and set it down on a small table on a tea pot stand, so that the heat should not injure the wood. Taking a large key in his left hand he dipped a spoon into the lead with his right and poured the contents slowly through the ring at the end of the handle of the key into a bowl of cold water. The sudden chill stiffened the lead into curious shapes and from them those who were clever at translating were to discover what the future held for them in the way of occupation.

"Mine looks more like a spinning wheel than anything else," said Roger who had done it first so that the rest might see how it was accomplished.

"Perhaps that means that you'll be a manufacturer of cloth," suggested Margaret. "Mine looks more like a cabbage than anything else. You don't

think it can mean that I shall have to devote myself to that husband I pulled out of the cabbage patch?"

"It may. Or it might mean that you'll be a gardener. Lots of women are going in for gardening now. By the time you're ready to start that may be a favored occupation for girls," said Dr. Watkins.

"Here are several things that we can do one at a time while the rest of us are doing something else," said Helen. "They have to be done alone or the spell won't work."

"Let's hear them," begged Gregory, while he and the others grouped themelves about the open fire in the living room and prepared to burn nuts.

"The first one, according to Burns, is to go alone to the kiln and put a clew of yarn in the kiln pot."

"What does that mean translated into Rosemont language?" demanded James.

"James the Scotsman asks for information! However, there's some excuse for him. Translated into Rosemont language it means that you go to the laundry and put a ball of yarn into the wash boiler."

"Easy so far."

"Take an end of the ball and begin to wind the yarn into a new ball. When you come near the end you'll find that something or some one will be holding it—"

"Roger, I'll bet!"

"You demand to know the name of your future wife and a hollow voice from out the wash boiler will tell you her name."

"I shan't try that one. There's too good a chance for Roger to put in some of his tricks. What's the next?"

"Take a candle and go to the Witches' Cave—that's the dining room—and stand in front of the looking glass that's on a little table in the corner,

and eat an apple. The face of your future wife or husband will appear over your shoulder."

"I'll try that. I could stand a face that kept still, but to have an unknown creature pulling my yarn and bawling my wife's name would upset my nerves!"

"Here's the last one. Go into the garden just as we did to pull the kale. Over at the right hand side there's a stack of barley. It's really corn, but we've re-christened it for tonight. You measure it three times round with your arms and at the end of the third round your beloved will rush into them."

"If he proves to be my cabbage spouse you'll hear loud shrieks from little Margaret!" declared that young woman.

"Here are my nuts to burn," said Ethel Blue, putting two chestnuts side by side on the hearth. "One is Della and the other is Ethel Blue," and she tapped them in turn as she gave them their names.

"What's this for?" asked Della, hearing her name used.

"This is to see if you and I will always be friends. That right hand nut is you and the left hand is me—no, I." Conscientious Ethel Blue interrupted herself to correct her grammar. "If we burn cosily side by side we'll stay friends a long time, but if one of us jumps or burns up before the other, she'll be the one to break the friendship."

"I hope I shan't be the one," and both girls sat down on the rug to watch their namesakes closely.

"Here are Margaret and her cabbage man," laughed Tom. "This delicate, slender chestnut is Margaret and this big round one is Mr. Stalk of the Cabbage Patch. Now we'll see how that match is going to turn out."

Margaret laughed good naturedly with the rest and they watched this pair as well as the others.

"Roger and I had a squabble yesterday," admitted Ethel Brown. "Here is Roger and here is Ethel Brown. Let's see how we are going to get on in the future."

"Where is Roger really?" some one asked, but at that instant Ethel Blue's nut and Della's caught fire and burned steadily side by side without any demonstrations, and every one looking on was so absorbed in translating the meaning of the blaze that no one pursued the question.

That is, not until a shriek from the Witches' Cave rang through the house and sent them all flying to see who was in trouble. Dorothy was found coming out of the dining room, mirror in hand, and a strange tale on her lips.

"If there's any truth in this Hallowe'en prophecy," she said with trembling voice, "my future husband will be worse than Margaret's cabbage man. The face that looked over my shoulder was exactly like a jack-o'-lantern's."

"It was? Where's Roger?" Dr. Watkins demanded instantly, while James hobbled to the front door and announced that the jack had disappeared from the front porch.

"Did any one ask for Roger?" demanded a cool voice, and Roger was seen coming down stairs.

"Yes, sir, numerous people asked for Roger. How did you do it?"

"Do what? Has anything happened in my absence?"

"Not a thing has happened in your *absence*. Just tell us how you managed it."

"I know," guessed Helen. "He went outside and took the jack from the porch and carried it through the kitchen into the dining room where it smiled over Dorothy's shoulder, and then he went into the

kitchen again and up the back stairs. Wasn't that it, Roger?"

"Young woman, you are wiser than your years," was all that Roger would say.

While they were teasing him a shouting in the garden sent them all to the back windows and doors. In the dim light of the young moon two figures were seen wrestling. It was evidently a good natured struggle, for peals of laughter fell on the ears of the listeners. When one of them dragged the other toward the house the figures proved to be Tom Watkins and George Foster.

"I was measuring the barley stack," explained Tom breathlessly, "and just as I made the third round and was eagerly expecting my future bride to rush into my arms, something did rush into my arms, but I'll leave it to the opinion of the meeting whether *this* can be my future bride!" and he held at arm's length by the coat collar the laughing, squirming figure of George Foster.

It was unanimously agreed that George did not have the appearance of a bride, and then they went back to the hall to bob for apples. Roger spread a rubber blanket on the floor and drew the tub from its hiding place in the corner where it had been waiting its turn in the games.

While the boys were making these arrangements Dorothy and Helen were busily trying to dispose of the two ends of the same string which stretched from one mouth to the other with a tempting raisin tied in the middle to encourage them to effort. It was forbidden to use the hands and tongues proved not always reliable. Now Dorothy seemed ahead, now Helen. Finally the victory seemed about to be Helen's, when she laughed and lost several inches of string and Dorothy triumphantly devoured the prize.

When the girls turned to see what the boys were

doing, Gregory and James were already bobbing for apples. One knelt at one side of the tub and the other at the other, and each had his eye, when it was not full of water, fixed on one of the apples that were bouncing busily about on the waves caused by their own motions.

"I speak for the red one," gasped Gregory.

"All right! I'll go for the greening," agreed James, and they puffed and sputtered, and were quite unable to fix their teeth in the sides of the slippery fruit until James drove his head right down to the bottom of the tub where he fastened upon the apple and came up dripping, but triumphant.

Stimulated by the applause that greeted James, Tom and Roger tossed in two apples and began a new contest.

"This isn't a girls' game is it?" murmured Helen as Tom won his apple by the same means that James had used.

"Not unless you're willing to forget your hair," replied Dr. Watkins.

"You can't forget it when it takes so long to dry it," Helen answered. "I'm content to let the boys have this entirely to themselves."

While the half drowned boys went up to Roger's room to dry their faces the girls prepared nut boats to set sail upon the same ocean that had floated the apples. They had cracked English walnuts carefully so that the two halves fell apart neatly, and in place of the meats they had packed a candle end tightly into each.

"We have the comfort of the apple even when we're defeated," said Gregory, coming down stairs, eating the fruit that he had not been able to capture without the use of his hands. "What have you got there?"

"Here's a boat apiece," explained Helen. "We

must each put a tiny flag of some sort on it so that we can tell which is which."

"This way?" George asked. "I've put a pin through a scrap of corn husk and stuck it on to the end of this craft."

"That's right. We must find something different for each one. Mine is a black-alder berry. See how red and bright it is?"

It was not hard for each to find an emblem.

"Watch me hoist the admiral's flag at the mainmast," said Roger, but the match that he set up for a mast caught fire almost as soon as the candles were lighted in the miniature fleet. His flag fell overboard, however, and was not injured.

"See that?" he commented. "That just proves that the flag of the U. S. A. can never perish," and the others greeted his words with cheers.

It was a pretty sight—the whole fleet afloat, each bit of candle burning clearly and each little craft tossing on the waves that Dr. Watkins produced by gently tipping the tub.

"This is also an attempt to gain some knowledge of the future," said Helen. "We must watch these boats and see which ones stay close together and which go far apart, and whether any of them are shipwrecked, and which ones seem to have the smoothest voyage."

"Della's and mine are sticking together just the way our nuts did," cried Ethel Blue, and she slipped her hand into Della's and gave it a little squeeze.

After the loss of its mainmast at the very beginning Roger's craft had no more mishaps. It slid alongside of James's and together they bobbed gently across life's stormy seas.

"It looks as if you and I were going into partnership, old man," James interpreted their behavior.

The other boats seemed to need no especial com-

panionship but floated on independently, only Gregory's coming to an untimely end from a heavy wave that washed over it and capsized it.

"I seem to hear a summons from the Witches' Cave," murmured Helen in an awed whisper as a sound like the wind whistling through pine trees fell on their ears, resolving itself as they listened into the words, "Come! Come! Come!"

Quietly they arose and tiptoed their way toward the dining room. They could only enter it by penetrating the thicket of boughs that barred the door. As they came nearer the voice retreated—"Almost as if it were going into the kitchen," whispered Margaret to Tom who happened to be next to her. The only light in the room came from a pan of alcohol and salt burning greenly in a corner and casting an unnatural hue over their faces. The black cats, their eyes touched with phosphorus, glared down from the plate rail.

Again the voice was heard:—"Gather, gather about the festal board."

"We must obey the witches," urged Helen, and they sat down in the chairs which they found placed at the table in just the right number. Into the dim room from the kitchen came two figures dressed in long black capes and pointed red hats and bearing each a dish heaped high with cakes of some sort.

"I just have to tell you what these are," said Ethel Brown in her natural voice as she and Ethel Blue marched around the table and placed one dish before Roger at one end and another before Helen at the other. "It's sowens."

"Sowens? What in the world are sowens?" everybody questioned.

"Grandfather told us that Burns says that sowens eaten with butter always make the Hallowe'en sup-

per, so we looked up in the Century Dictionary how to make them and this is the result."

"Do you think they're safe?" inquired Della.

"There's a doctor here to take care of us if anything happens," laughed James. "I'm game. Give me a chance at them."

Roger and Helen began a distribution of the cakes.

"Sowens is—or are—good," decided Dr. Watkins, tasting his cake slowly, and pronouncing judgment on it after due deliberation.

"We tried them yesterday to make sure they were eatable by Americans, and we thought they were pretty good, smoking hot, with butter on them, just as Burns directed."

"Right. They are," agreed all the boys promptly, and the girls agreed with them, though they were not quite so enthusiastic in their expression of appreciation as the boys.

Baked apples, nuts and raisins, countless cookies of various kinds and hot gingerbread made an appetizing meal. As it was coming to an end Helen rapped on the table.

"Please let me pretend this is a club meeting for a minute or two instead of a party. I want to tell the people here who aren't members of the U. S. C. what it is we are trying to do."

"We know," responded George. "You're working for the Christmas Ship. Didn't I dance in your minuet?"

"We are working for the Christmas Ship, but that is only one thing that the Club does."

"What do the initials mean?" asked Gregory.

"United Service Club. You see Father is in the Navy and Uncle Richard is in the Army so we have the United Service in the family. But that is just a family pun. The real purpose of the Club is to do some service for somebody whenever we can."

"Something on the Boy Scout idea of doing a kindness ever day," nodded Dr. Watkins.

"Just now it's the Christmas Ship and after that sails we'll hunt up something else. Why I told you about it now is because we planned to go out in a few minutes and go up and down some of the streets, and—"

"Lift gates?" asked Gregory.

"No, not lift gates. That's the point. We couldn't very well be a service club and do mean things to people just for the fun of it."

"Oh, lifting gates isn't mean."

"Isn't it! I don't believe you'd find it enormously entertaining to hunt up your gate the next day and re-hang it, would you?"

Gregory admitted that perhaps it would not.

"So we're going out to play good fairies instead of bad ones, and if any of you knows anybody we can do a good turn to, please speak up."

"That's the best scheme I've heard in some time," said Edward Watkins admiringly. "Let's start. I'm all impatience to be a good fairy."

So they said "good-night" to Dicky, bundled into their coats and each one of the boys took a jack-o'-lantern to light the way. Roger also carried a kit that bulged with queer shapes, and the girls each had a parcel whose contents was not explained by the president.

"Lead the way, Roger," she commanded as they left the house.

"Church Street first," he answered.

"Church Street? I wonder if he's going to do Mother and me a good turn," giggled Dorothy.

It proved that he was not, for he passed the Smith cottage and went on until he came to the house in which lived the Misses Clark. Roger was taking care of their furnace, together with his mother's and

his Aunt Louise's, in order to earn money for the expenses of the Club, and he had discovered that these old ladies were not very happy in spite of living in a comfortable house and apparently having everything they needed.

"These Misses Clark are lonely," he whispered as they gathered before the door. "They think nobody cares for them—and nobody does much, to tell the honest truth. So here's where we sing two songs for them," and without waiting for any possible objections he broke into "The Christmas Ship" which they all knew, and followed it with "Sister Susie's Sewing Shirts for Soldiers."

"Not very appropriate, but they'll do," whispered Roger to Dr. Watkins, whose clear tenor supported him. Dorothy's sweet voice soared high, Tom's croak made a heavy background, and the more or less tuneful voices of the others added a hearty body of sound. There was no response from the house except that a corner of an upstairs curtain was drawn aside for an instant.

"They probably think they won't find anything left on their front porch when they come down in the morning. They've had Hallowe'en visits before, poor ladies," said Gregory as they tramped away.

The next visit was to a different part of the town. Here the girls left two of their bundles which proved to contain apples and cookies.

"I don't believe these people ever have a cent they can afford to spend on foolishness like this," Helen explained to Dr. Watkins, "but they aren't the sort of people you can give things to openly, so we thought we'd take this opportunity," and she smiled happily and went on behind Roger's leadership.

This time the visit was to the Atwoods, the old couple down by the bridge. Roger had been interested in them for a long time. They were not suffer-

ing, for a son supported them, but both were almost crippled with rheumatism and sometimes the old man found the little daily chores about the house hard to do, and often the old woman longed for a little amusement of which she was deprived because she could not go to visit her friends. It was here that Roger's kit came into play. He took from it several hatchets and distributed them to the boys.

"We're going to chop the gentleman's kindling and stack up the wood that's lying round here while the girls sing to the old people," he announced.

So the plan was carried out. The girls gathered about the doorstep, and, led by Dorothy, sang cradle songs and folk songs and a hymn or two, while the boys toiled away behind the house. Again there was no response.

"Probably they've gone to bed," guessed Ethel Brown.

"I imagine they're lying awake, though," said Ethel Blue softly.

It is an old adage that "many hands make light work," and it is equally true that they turn off a lot of it, so at the end of half an hour the old peoples' wood pile was in apple pie order and the yard was in a spick and span condition.

There were two more calls before the procession turned home and at both houses bundles of goodies were left for children who would not be apt to have them. On the way back to the house the U. S. C.'s came across the trail of a Hallowe'en party of the usual kind, and they pleased themselves mightily by hanging two gates which they found unhung, and by restoring to their proper places several signs which some village wit—"or witling," suggested Dr. Watkins—had misplaced.

The evening ended with the cutting of a cake in which was baked a ring.

"The one who gets the ring in his slice will be married first," announced Mrs. Morton, who had prepared the cake as a surprise for those who had been surprising others.

They cut it with the greatest care and slowly, one after the other. To the delight of all Dr. Watkins's slice proved to contain the ring.

"I rather imagine that's the most suitable arrangement the ring could have made," laughed Mrs. Smith.

"If one of these youngsters had found it, it would have meant that I'd have to wait a long time for my turn," he laughed back. "Wish me luck."

CHAPTER III

MISS MERRIAM

THE first fortnight of November rushed by with the final preparations for the sailing of the Christmas Ship filling every moment of the time of the members of the United Service Club. When at last their three packing cases of gifts were expressed to Brooklyn, they drew a sigh of relief, but when the *Jason* actually left the pier they felt as if all purpose had been taken out of their lives.

This feeling did not linger with them long, however, for it was not many days later that there appeared at the Morton's a Red Cross nurse, invalided home from Belgium, bringing with her the Belgian baby which they had begged their teacher, Mademoiselle Millerand, who had joined the French Red Cross, to send them.

Truth to tell, the arrival of the baby was entirely unexpected. It had come about in this way. When the club went to bid farewell to Mademoiselle Millerand on the steamer they learned that she hoped to be sent to some hospital in Belgium. Ethel Blue, who had been reading a great deal about the suffering of the women and children in Belgium, cried, "Belgium! Oh, do send us a Belgian baby!" The rest had taken up the cry and James had had the discomfiture of being kissed by an enthusiastic French woman on the pier who was delighted with their warmheartedness.

At intervals they mentioned the Belgian baby, but quite as a joke and not at all as a possibility. So when the Red Cross nurse came with her tiny charge and told them how Mademoiselle Millerand had not been able to resist taking their offer seriously since it meant help and perhaps life itself for this little warworn child, they were thoroughly surprised.

Their surprise, however, did not prevent them from rising to meet the situation. Indeed, it would have been hard for any one to resist the appeal made by the pale little creature whose hands were too weak to do more than clutch faintly at a finger and whose eyes were too weary to smile.

Mrs. Morton took her to her arms and heart at once. So did all the members of the Club and it was when they gave a cheer for "Elisabeth of Belgium," that she made her first attempt at laughter. Mademoiselle had written that her name was Elisabeth and the nurse said that she called herself that, but, so far as her new friends could find out, that was the extent of her vocabulary. "Ayleesabet," she certainly was, but the remainder of her remarks were not only few but so uncertain that they could not tell whether she was trying to speak Flemish or French or a language of her own.

The nurse was obliged to return at once to New York, and the Mortons found themselves at nightfall in the position of having an unexpected guest for whom there was no provision. Even the wardrobe of the new member of the family was almost nothing, consisting of the garments she was wearing and an extra gingham dress which a woman in the steerage of the ship had taken from her own much larger child to give to the waif.

"Ayleesabet" ate her supper daintily, like one who has been so near the borderland of starvation that he cannot understand the uses of plenty, and then she went heavily to sleep in Ethel Blue's lap before the fire in the living room.

Aunt Louise and Dorothy came over from their cottage to join the conference.

"It is really a considerable problem," said Mrs. Morton thoughtfully. "These children here say they are going to attend to her clothing, and it's

right they should, for she is the Club baby; but there are other questions that are serious. Where, for instance, is she going to sleep?"

A laugh rippled over the room as she asked the question, for the sleeping accommodations of the Morton house were regarded as a joke since the family was so large and the house was so small that a guest always meant a considerable process of rearrangement.

"It isn't any laughing matter, girls. She can have Dicky's old crib, of course, but where shall we put it?"

"It's perfectly clear to me," said Mrs. Smith, responding to an appealing glance from Dorothy, "that the baby must come to us. Dorothy and I have plenty of room in the cottage, and it would be a very great happiness to both of us—the greatest happiness that has come to me since—since—"

She hesitated and Dorothy knew that she was thinking about the baby brother who had died years ago.

"It does seem the best way," replied Mrs. Morton, "but—"

" 'But me no buts'," quoted Mrs. Smith, smiling. "The baby's coming is equally sudden to all of us, only I happen to be a bit better prepared for an unexpected guest, because I have more space. Then Dorothy has been just as crazy as the other girls to have a 'Belgian baby,' and she shouted just as loudly as anybody at the pier—I heard her."

"Always excepting James," Ethel Brown reminded them and they all laughed, remembering James and his Gallic salute.

"Don't take her to-night, Aunt Louise," begged Ethel Blue. "Let us have her just one night. We can put Dicky's crib into our room between Ethel Brown's bed and mine."

It was finally decided that Elisabeth should not be taken to Dorothy's until the next day, but Mrs. Morton insisted on keeping her in her own room for the night.

"She has such a slight hold on life that she ought to have an experienced eye watching her for some time to come," she said.

All the girls assisted at the baby's going to bed ceremonies, and tall Helen felt a catch in her throat no less than Ethel Blue at sight of the wasted legs and arms and hollow chest.

"I wonder, now," said Aunt Louise when they had gone down stairs again, leaving Ethel Blue and Ethel Brown to sit in the next room until their own bedtime, so that the faintest whimper might not go unheard. "I wonder where we are going to find some one competent to take care of this baby. A child in such a condition needs more than ordinary care; she needs skilled care."

"Mary might have some relatives," Dorothy began, when Helen made a rushing suggestion.

"Why not go to the School of Mothercraft? You remember, it was at Chautauqua for the summer? And it's back in New York now. I've been meaning to ask you or Grandmother or Aunt Louise to take me there some Saturday, only we've been so busy with the Ship we didn't have time for anything else. You remember it?" she asked anxiously, for she had especial reasons for wanting her mother to remember the School of Mothercraft.

"Certainly I remember it, and I believe it will give us just what we want now. It's a new sort of school," she explained to Mrs. Smith. "The students are young women who are studying the science and art of home-making. They are working out home problems in a real home in which there are real children."

"Babies and all?"

"Babies and children of other sizes. I'm going to study there when I leave college. Mother says I may," cried Helen, delighted that her favorite school was on the point of proving its usefulness in her own family.

"Can you get mother helpers from there?"

"You can, and they're scientifically trained young women. Many of them are college graduates who are taking this as graduate work."

"Then I should say that the thing for us to do," said Mrs. Smith, "was to leave the baby in Mary's care tomorrow and go in to New York and see what we can find at the School of Mothercraft. Will the students be willing to break in on their course?"

"Perhaps not, but the Director of the school is sure to know of some of her former pupils who will be available. That was a brilliant idea of yours, Helen," and Helen sank back into her chair pleased at the gentle stroke of approval that went from her mother's hand to hers.

Dorothy and Mrs. Smith were just preparing to go home when the bell rang and Dr. Hancock was announced.

"James and Margaret came home with a wonderful tale of a foundling with big eyes," he said when he had greeted everybody, "and I thought I'd better come over and have a look at her. I should judge she'd need pretty close watching for a long time."

"She will," assented Mrs. Morton, and told him of their plan to secure a helper from the School of Mothercraft.

"The very best thing you can do," the doctor agreed heartily. "I'm on the Advisory Board of the School with several other physicians and I don't know any institution I approve of more heartily."

"Ayleesabet" was found to be sleeping deeply, but

her breathing was even and her skin properly moist and the physician was satisfied.

"I'll run over every day for a week or two," he promised. "We must make the little creature believe American air is the best tonic in the world."

If the U. S. C. had had its way every member would have gone with Mrs. Morton and Mrs. Smith when they made their trip of inquiry on the next day. As it was, they decided that it was of some importance that Helen should go with them, and so they went at a later hour than they had at first intended, so that she might join them.

"There's no recitation at the last period," she explained, "and I can make up the study hour in the evening."

When the news of the baby's arrival was telephoned to Mrs. Emerson she suggested a farther change of plan.

"Let me go, too," she said; "I'll call in the car for you and Louise and we'll pick up Helen at the schoolhouse and we shall travel so fast that it will make up for the later start."

Everybody thought that a capital suggestion, and Mrs. Emerson arrived half an hour early so that she might make the acquaintance of Elisabeth. The waif was not demonstrative but she was entirely friendly.

"She seems to have forgotten how to play, if she ever knew," said Mrs. Morton, "but we hope she'll learn soon."

"She sees so many new faces it's a wonder she doesn't howl continually," said Mary to whose kindly finger Elisabeth was clinging steadfastly as she gazed seriously into Mrs. Emerson's smiling face. Then for the second time since her arrival she smiled. It was a smile that brought tears to their

eyes, so faint and sad was it, but it was a smile after all, and they all stood about, happy in her approval.

"You two have your own children and Father and I are all alone now," said Grandmother, wiping her eyes. "Let us have Elisabeth. We need her—and we should love her so."

"Oh!" cried both of the younger women in tones of such disappointment that Mrs. Emerson saw at once that if she wanted a nursling she must look for another, not Elisabeth of Belgium.

"After all, perhaps it is better for her," she admitted. "Here she will have the children and will grow up among young people. Are you ready?"

When they picked up Helen she had a request to make of her grandmother.

"I telephoned about the baby to Margaret at recess, just to tell her Elisabeth was well this morning, and she was awfully interested in the idea of the helper from the School of Mothercraft. She gets out of school earlier than we do—she'd be just home. I'm sure she wouldn't keep you waiting. And the house is only a step from the main street—can't we take her?"

So Margaret was added to the party that sped on to the ferry. To everybody's surprise, when they reached the New York end of the ferry Edward Watkins signalled the chauffeur to stop.

"Roger telephoned Tom and Della about the baby," he explained, "and about your coming in today and I thought perhaps I might do something to help. I don't want to intrude—"

"We're going to the School of Mothercraft," said Mrs. Morton, "and we'd be glad to have you go with us. I don't know that we shall need to call on your professional advice but if you can spare the time we'd like to have you."

"Unfortunately, time is the commodity I'm richest

in," smiled the young doctor, taking the seat beside the chauffeur.

The ride up town was a pleasure to the girls who did not often come to the city, and then seldom had an opportunity to ride in any automobile but a taxi-cab. As soon as possible they swung in to Fifth Avenue, whose brilliant shop windows and swiftly moving traffic excited them. They were quite thrilled when they drew up before a pretty house, no different in appearance from any of its neighbors, except that an unobtrusive sign notified seekers that they had found the right place.

"It's a school to learn home-making in," Helen explained to Margaret in a low tone as they followed the elders up the steps, "so it ought to be in a real house and not a schoolhouse-y place."

Margaret nodded, for they were being ushered into a cheerful reception room, simply but attractively furnished. In a minute they were being greeted by the Director who remembered meeting at Chautauqua all of them except Edward, and she recalled other members of his family and especially the Watkins bull-dog, Cupid, who was a prominent figure in Chautauqua life.

Mrs. Morton explained their errand, and also the reasons that had brought so large a number of them to the School.

"We're a deputation representing several families and a club, all of which are interested in the baby, but I should like to have the young woman you select for us understand that we are going to rely on her knowledge and skill, and that she won't be called to account by a council of war every time she washes the baby's face."

The Director smiled.

"I quite understand," she said. "I think I know just the young woman you want. She finished her

course here last May, and then she went with me to Chautauqua for the summer and helped me there with the work we did in measurements and in making out food schedules and so on for children whose mothers brought them to us for our advice. Miss Merriam—Gertrude Merriam is her name—is taking just one course here now, and I think she'll be willing to give it up and glad to undertake the care of a baby that needs such special attention as your little waif."

The whole party followed the Director upstairs and looked over with interest the scientifically appointed rooms. There was a kindergarten where those of the children in the house who were old enough, together with a few from outside, were taught in the morning hours. The nursery with its spotless white beds and furniture and its simple and appropriate pictures was as good to look at as a hospital ward, "and a lot pleasanter," said Dr. Watkins. Out of it opened a wee roof garden and there a few of the children dressed in thick coats and warm hoods were playing, while a sweet-faced young woman sitting on the floor, seemed quite at home with them. She tried to rise as the Director's party came out unexpectedly on her. Her foot caught in her skirt and Dr. Watkins sprang forward to give her a helping hand.

"This is Miss Merriam of whom I was speaking," said the Director, introducing her. "Will you ask Miss Morgan to come out here with the children and will you join us in the study?" she asked.

Miss Merriam assented and when her successor arrived the flock went in again to see the children's dining-room and the arrangements made for doing special cooking for such of them as needed it.

"We try not to have elaborate equipment," explained the Director. "I want my young women to

be able to work with what any mother provides for her home and not to be dependent on machines and utensils that are seldom found outside of hospitals. They are learning thoroughly the scientific side. Miss Merriam, who, I hope, will go to you, is a college graduate, and in college she studied biology and food values and ventilation and sanitation and such matters. Since she has been here she has reviewed all that work under the physicians who lecture here, and she has practised first aid and made a special study of infant requirements. You couldn't have any one better trained for what you need."

Dr. Watkins gave his chair to Miss Merriam when she came to join the conference, and asked Mrs. Morton by a motion of the eyebrows if he should withdraw. When her reply was negative he sat down again. Miss Merriam blushed as she faced the group but she was entirely at her ease. Mrs. Morton explained their need.

"A Belgian baby!" she cried. "And you want me to take care of her! Why, Mrs. Morton, there's nothing in the world I should like better. The poor little dud! When shall I go to you?"

"Just as soon as you can," replied Mrs. Morton. "We've left her today in charge of my little boy's old nurse, but as soon as you come we shall move her to my sister-in-law's."

Miss Merriam turned inquiringly to Mrs. Smith, who smiled in return.

"Mrs. Smith has only her daughter and herself in her family so she has more space in her house than I have."

"But it's just round the corner from us so we can see the baby every day," cried Helen.

"I can go to Rosemont early tomorrow morning," said Miss Merriam. "Tell me, please, how to reach there."

She glanced at Mrs. Morton, but Dr. Watkins answered her.

"If you'll allow me," he said; "I have an errand in Rosemont tomorrow and I'd be very glad to show you the way."

Miss Merriam's blue eyes rested on him questioningly.

"I'm an 'in-law' of the Club," he explained. "My brother and sister, Tom and Della, are devoted members of the U. S. C. and sometimes they let me join them."

"The doctor's bull-dog is an 'in-law,' too," laughed Mrs. Smith. "Don't you remember him at Chautauqua?"

"The dog with the perfectly *extraordinary* face? I do indeed remember him," and the inquiring blue eyes twinkled.

"He appeared in an entertainment that the Club gave a few weeks ago for the Christmas Ship and I think he received more applause than any other performer."

"I'm not surprised," exclaimed Miss Merriam. "Thank you, Dr. Watkins, I shall be glad of your help," and Edward had a comfortable feeling that he was accepted as a friend, though he was not quite sure whether it was on his own merits or because he had a share in the ownership of a dog with an *extraordinary* face.

He did not care which it was, however, when he called the next morning and found Miss Merriam waiting for him. She was well tailored and her handbag was all that it should be.

"I hate messy girls with messy handbags," he thought to himself after a sweeping glance had assured him that there was nothing "messy" about this Mothercraft girl. The blue eyes were serious this morning, but they had a laugh in them, too, when he

told her of the way the Belgian baby was first called for, upon a young girl's impulse, and the reward James Hancock had received for his cordial joining in the cry.

"I'm going to like them all, every one of them," Miss Merriam said in the soft voice that was at the same time clear and firm.

"I'm sure they'll like you," responded Edward.

"I hope they will. I shall try to make them. But the baby will be a delight, any way."

At Rosemont, to Dr. Watkins's disappointment, they found Grandmother Emerson and the automobile waiting at the station. Edward bowed his farewell and went off upon his errand, and Mrs. Emerson and Miss Merriam drove to Mrs. Smith's where they found Elisabeth already installed in a sunny room out of which opened another for Miss Merriam. The arrangement had been made by Dorothy's moving into a smaller chamber over the front door.

"I don't mind it a bit," she declared to her mother, "and please don't say a word about it to Miss Merriam—she might feel badly."

So Gertrude Merriam accepted her room all unconsciously, and rejoiced in its brightness. The baby was lying before the window of her own room when Gertrude entered. It moved a listless hand as she knelt beside it.

"You little darling creature!" she exclaimed and Elisabeth gave her infrequent smile as if she knew that woman's love and science were going to work together for her.

CHAPTER IV

ELISABETH MAKES FRIENDS

UNDER Miss Merriam's skilful care Elisabeth of Belgium slowly climbed the hill of health. She had grown so weak that she required to be treated like a child much younger than she really was. Miss Merriam gave her extremely nourishing food in small amounts and often; she made her rest hours as long as those of a baby of a year and her naps were always taken in the open air, where she lay warmly curled up in soft rugs like a little Eskimo. At night she and her care-taker slept on an upper porch where she drew deep draughts of fresh air far down into the depths of her tiny relaxed body.

"Ayleesabet"—everybody adopted her own pronunciation—was napping in Dicky's old perambulator on the porch of Dorothy's cottage one Saturday morning early in December. The Ethels, their coat collars turned up and rugs wrapping their knees, were keeping guard beside her. Both of them were alternately knitting and warming their fingers.

"When she wakes up we can roll her down the street a little way," said Ethel Blue.

"Did Miss Merriam say so?"

"Yes, she said we might keep her out until twelve."

"Are the Hancocks and Watkinses coming early to the Club meeting?"

"About half past two. The afternoons are so short now that they thought they'd better come early so it wouldn't be pitch black night when they got home."

"We ought to do some planning for Christmas this afternoon. There's a lot to think about."

"There's one Christmas gift I wish Aunt Marian would give us."

"What's that?" asked Ethel Brown expectantly for she had great faith in the ideas that Ethel Blue brought forth now and then.

"Don't you think it would be nice if she would let us have a visit from Katharine Jackson for one of our presents?"

Katharine Jackson was the daughter of an army officer stationed at Fort Edward in Buffalo. Her father and Ethel Blue's father had been in the same class at West Point and her mother had known Ethel Blue's mother who had died when she was a tiny baby. The two Ethels had had a week-end with Katharine the previous summer, going to Buffalo from Chautauqua for the purpose of spending a glorious Saturday at Niagara Falls.

"O-oh!" cried Ethel Brown, "that's one of the finest things you ever thought of! Let's speak to Mother as soon as we go home and write to Mrs. Jackson and Katharine this afternoon if she says 'yes'."

"I'm almost sure she will say 'yes'."

"So am I. If Katherine comes we can save all our Christmas festivities for the time she's here so there'll be plenty to entertain her."

"Ayleesabet is waking. Hullo, sweet lamb," and both girls leaned over the carriage, happy because their nursling condescended to smile on them when she opened her eyes. Miss Merriam brought out a cup of warm food when it was reported to her that her charge had finished her nap, and when the luncheon was consumed with evidences of satisfaction the Ethels took the carriage out on to the sidewalk. Elisabeth sat up, still sleepy-eyed and rosy

from her nap, and gazed about her seriously at the road that was already becoming familiar.

"Oh, dear," sighed Ethel Blue under her breath, "there are the Misses Clark coming out of their house."

"I hope they aren't going to complain of Roger," Ethel Brown said, for Roger acted as furnace man for these elderly ladies who had gained for themselves a reputation of being ill-natured."

"It's too late to cross the street. They look as if they were coming expressly to speak to us. See, they haven't got their hats on."

It did indeed look as if the little procession was being waylaid, for the Misses Clark stood inside their gate waiting for the Ethels to come up.

"We saw you coming," they said when the carriage came near enough, "and we came out to see the baby. This is the Belgian baby?"

"Yes; this is Ayleesabet."

"Ayleesabet? Elisabeth, I suppose. Why do you call her that?"

"That's what she calls herself, and it seems to be the only word she remembers so we thought we'd let her hear it instead of giving her a new name."

"Ayleesabet," repeated the elder Miss Clark, coming through the gate. "Will you shake hands with me, Ayleesabet?"

She held out her hand to the solemn child who sat staring at her with unmoved expression. Ethel Blue hesitatingly began to explain that the baby did not yet know how to shake hands, when to their amazement Elisabeth extended a tiny mittened paw and laid it in Miss Clark's hand.

"The dear child!" exclaimed both women, and the elder flushed warmly as if the delicate contact had touched an intimate chord. She gave the mit-

ten a pressure and held it, Elisabeth making no objection.

"Won't you bring her in to see us once in a while?" begged the younger Miss Clark. "We should like so much to have you. We've watched her go by with that charming looking young woman who takes care of her."

"Miss Merriam. She's from the School of Mothercraft," and Ethel Brown explained the work of the school.

"How fortunate you were to know about the school. It would have been anxious work for Mrs. Morton and Mrs. Smith if they had had full responsibility for such a feeble baby."

"We all love Miss Meriam," said Ethel Blue. "Say 'Gertrude,' Elisabeth," and Elisabeth obediently repeated "Gertrude" in her soft pipe, and looked about for the owner of the name.

"We'll bring her in to call on you," promised the Ethels, saying "Good-bye," and they went on feeling far more gently disposed toward their cross-patch neighbors than they ever had before. As for the "cross-patches," they looked after the carriage as long as it was in sight.

When the girls returned to Dorothy's they found Edward Watkins there.

"It's very nice of you to come out to see how the baby is getting along," said Ethel Brown, going in to the living room, while Ethel Blue helped Miss Merriam take Elisabeth out of the carriage.

"I mean to keep an eye on her," replied Edward gravely.

"You don't really have to do it if it isn't convenient, you know," returned Ethel. "Of course we appreciate it tremendously, but Dr. Hancock is nearer and he's been coming over quite regularly."

"I shan't try to compete with Dr. Hancock," promised Dr. Watkins; "but Elisabeth is the Club baby, you know, and Tom and Della are members so as their brother I feel almost a personal interest."

"It's lovely of you to feel so. I just didn't want you to be bothered," explained Ethel conscientiously.

When Miss Merriam brought the baby in he examined her carefully as one tiny hand after another was released from its mitten and one slender leg after the other emerged from the knitted trousers.

"She isn't what you'd call really fat yet, is she?" he commented.

"She's a porpoise compared with what she was at the beginning," insisted Ethel Blue stoutly. "Miss Merriam can tell you how many ounces she has gained."

"She's gained in happiness, any way," smiled the young physician as the baby murmured "Gertrude" and patted Gertrude's flushing cheek.

There was a full meeting of the United Service Club when Helen called it to order at a quarter of three and informed the members that it was high time for them to discuss what they were going to do as a club for Christmas.

"To tell the truth, I was awfully ashamed about our forgetting to do anything for anybody on Thanksgiving. It all came out right, because our 'show' for the Home went off well and the old ladies were pleased, but we didn't originate the idea and I feel as if we ought to make up for our forgetfulness by doing something extra at Christmas. Now who has any suggestions?"

"I'd like to know first," asked James, the treasurer, "just how we stand with regard to Elisabeth.

I know we can't afford to pay Miss Merriam's salary; I'am afraid we've got to call on the grown-ups for that—but we can do something and we must, and we ought to find out about it exactly."

"Mrs. Emerson is paying half Miss Merriam's salary," explained Dorothy.

"And Aunt Louise the other half," added Ethel Brown.

"I wrote to Father about Elisabeth," said Ethel Blue, "and he said he'd send us a hundred dollars a year for her. We could put it in the bank for her, he said, if we didn't need to use it for doctors' bills or anything else."

"Here's my pay from the Misses Clark; they forked over this morning," said Roger elegantly, as he in turn "forked over" a bill to James. "Madam President, may the treasurer report, please?"

"The treasurer will kindly tell us what there is at the Club's disposal," directed Helen.

"The treasurer is obliged to confess that there isn't very much," admitted James. "The Christmas Ship just about cleaned us out, and the cost of some of the material for costumes for 'Miles Standish' nearly used up what was left. This greenback of Roger's is the best looking thing I've seen for some days."

"I haven't paid my dues for December," confessed Ethel Blue. "Here they are."

It proved that one or two of the others were also delinquent, but even after all had paid there was a very small sum in hand compared with what they needed.

"There isn't any use getting gloomy over the situation," urged Helen. "If we haven't got the money, we haven't, that's all, and we must do the

best we can without it. Mother and Aunt Louise will wait to be paid. It isn't as if we had been extravagant and run into debt. The baby came unexpectedly and had to be made comfortable right off. We can assume that responsibility and pay up when we are able. I don't think that we ought to let that interrupt any plans we have to make Christmas pleasant for anybody."

"I believe you're right," agreed Tom, "but I think we must limit ourselves somewhat."

"You'll be limited by the low state of the treasury, young man," growled James.

"Wait and hear me. I imagine that what the president has in mind for our Christmas work is doing something for the children in the Glen Point orphanage."

Helen and Margaret nodded.

"What do you say, then, if we decide to limit our Christmas work as a club to doing something for the orphanage and for Elisabeth? And I should like to suggest that no one of us gives a personal present that costs more than ten cents to any relative or friend. Then we can place in the club treasury whatever we had intended to spend more than that, and do the best we can with whatever amount that puts into James's hands for the Glen Point orphans and Elisabeth. Am I clear?" and he sank back in his chair in seeming exhaustion.

"You're very long-winded, Thomas," pronounced Roger, patting his friend on the shoulder, "but we get your idea. I second the motion, Madam President. We'll give ten cent presents to our relatives and friends and put all the rest of our stupendous fortunes into giving the orphans a good time and getting some duds for Ayleesabet or paying for what she has already."

The motion was carried unanimously, and each one of them handed to James a calculation of how much he would be able to contribute to the Christmas fund.

"It will come pretty near being ten cent presents for the orphans," James pronounced after some work with pencil and paper. "We can't give them anything that the wildest imagination could call handsome."

"There are plenty of people interested in the orphanage who give the children clothes and all their necessities, you know," Margaret reminded her brother. "Don't you remember when we talked this over before we said that what we'd do for them would be to give them some foolishnesses—just silly things that all children enjoy and that no one ever seems to think it worth while to give to youngsters in an institution."

"Will they have a tree?"

"Our church always sends a tree over there, but I must say it's a pretty lean tree," commented James. "It has pretty lights and a bag of candy apiece for the kids, and they stand around and sing carols before they're allowed to take a suck of the candy, and that's all there is to it."

"The Young Ladies' Guild has an awfully good time dressing it," testified Margaret.

"So did I winding up Dicky's mechanical toys last Christmas," said Roger rather shamefacedly. "I'm afraid the poor kid didn't get much of a look-in until I got tired of them."

"In view of these revelations, Madam President," began Tom, "I move that whatever we do for the orphans shall be something that they can join in themselves, and not just look at. Anybody got an idea?"

"Our minds have been so full of the Christmas Ship that it has squeezed everything else out, I'm afraid," admitted Della, with a delicate frown drawing her eyebrows.

"Why can't we continue to make the Christmas Ship useful somehow?" inquired Dorothy.

"Meaning?"

"I hardly know. Perhaps we could have our presents for the children in a Christmas Ship instead of on a tree."

"That's good. They'll have one tree anyway; this will be a novelty, and it can be made pretty."

"Can we get enough stuff to fill a ship?"

"Depends on the size of the ship."

"It wouldn't have to be full; just the deck could be heaped with parcels."

"And the rigging could be lighted."

"How can we ring in the children so they can have more of a part than singing carols?"

"Why not make them do the work themselves—the work of distributing the gifts?"

"I know," cried Helen. "Why not tell them about the real Christmas Ship and then tell them that they are to play that they all went over with it on its Christmas errand. We can dress up some of the boys as sailors—"

"Child, you don't realize what you're suggesting," exclaimed Margaret. "Do you know there are twenty or twenty-five boys there? We couldn't make all those costumes!"

"That's true," agreed Helen, dismayed. Her dismay soon turned to cheerfulness, however. "Why couldn't they wear an arm band marked SAILOR? They can use their imaginations to supply the rest of the costume."

"That would do well enough. And have another group of them marked LONGSHOREMAN."

"We can pick out the tallest boy to represent Commander Courtney and some of the others to be officers."

"You're giving all the work to the boys; what can the girls do?"

"Don't let's have any of them play orphan. That would come too near home. They won't follow the story too far. They'll be contented to distribute the gifts to each other."

"Here's where the girls can come in. The officers can bring the good ship into port, and the sailors can make a handsome showing along the side as she comes up to the pier, and the longshoremen can stagger ashore laden with big bundles. On the shore there can be groups of girls who will undo the large bundles and take out the small ones that they contain. Other groups of girls can go about giving out the presents."

"I'll bet they'll have such a good time playing the game they won't notice whether the presents are ten centers or fifties," shouted Roger. "I believe we've got the right notion."

"We must do everything up nicely so they'll have fun opening the parcels," insisted Helen.

"Here's where James begins pasting again. Where's my pastepot, Dorothy?" inquired James who had done wonders in making boxes to contain the gifts that went in the real Ship.

"Here are all your arrangements in the corner, and I'll make you some paste right off," said Dorothy, pointing out the corner of the attic where a table held cardboard and flowered paper and scissors.

Unless there was some especial reason for a meet-

ing elsewhere the Club always met in Dorothy's attic, where the afternoon sun streamed in cheerfully through the low windows. There the members could leave their unfinished work and it would not be disturbed, and the place had proved to be so great a comfort during the autumn months that Mrs. Smith had had a radiator put in so that it was warm and snug for winter use. Electric lights had made it possible for them to work there occasionally during the evening and it was as cheerful an apartment as one would care to see, even though its furniture was made largely of boxes converted into useful articles by Dorothy's inventive genius.

"Some time during Christmas week we ought to cheer up the old couple by the bridge," urged Roger.

"The same people we chopped wood for?" asked Tom.

"The Atwoods—yes. It gets on my nerves to see them sitting there so dully, every day when I pass by on my way to school."

"We certainly won't forget them. We can do something that won't make any demand on our treasury, so Tom won't mind our adding them to our Christmas list."

"I dare say we'll think of others before we go much farther. What we need to do now is to decide on things to make for the Glen Pointers," and the talk went off into a discussion which proved to be merely a selection from what they had learned to do while they were making up their parcels for the real Christmas Ship. Now, with but a short time before Christmas, they chose articles that could be made quickly. The girls also decided on the candies that each should make to fill the boxes, and they made requisition on the treasury for the materials so that they could go to work at once upon

the lasting kinds. Before the afternoon was over the attic resumed once more the busy look it had worn for so many weeks before the sailing of the *Jason*.

"Ethel Blue!" came a call up the attic stairs.

Ethel Blue ran down to see what her aunt wanted, and came back beaming, two letters in her hand.

"Here's a letter from Mrs. Jackson to Aunt Marion saying that Katharine may come to us for a fortnight, and another one from Katharine to me telling how crazy she is to come. Isn't it fine!"

Ethel threw her arm over Ethel Brown's shoulder and pulled her into the march that was the Mortons' expression of great pleasure: "One, two, three, back; one, two, three, back," around the attic.

"When is she coming?" asked Roger, who had never seen Katharine and so was able to endure calmly the prospect of her visit.

"Two days before Christmas—that's Wednesday in the afternoon."

"We'll ask grandmother to let us have the car to go and get her; it's so much more fun than the train," proposed Ethel Brown.

"Um, glorious."

The attic rang with the Ethels' delight—at which they looked back afterwards with some wonder.

CHAPTER V

THE GOOD SHIP "JASON"

THE Rosemont schools closed for the holidays at noon of the Wednesday before Christmas, so all the Mortons and Dorothy were free to avail themselves of Mrs. Emerson's offer of her car to bring Katharine from Hoboken. It was a pleasant custom of the family to regard any guests as belonging not to one or another member in particular but to all of them. All felt a responsibility for the guest's happiness and all shared in any amusement that he or she might give.

According to this custom, not the Ethels alone went to meet Katharine, but Helen and Roger and Dorothy, too. Mrs. Morton chaperoned them and Dicky was added for good measure. It was a sharp day and the Rosemont group were rosy with cold when they reached the station and lined themselves up on the platform just before the Buffalo train drew in. Katharine and the Jacksons' German maid, Gretchen, were among the first to get off.

"Gretchen is going to make a holiday visit, too," Katharine explained when she had greeted the Ethels, whom she knew, and had been introduced to the other members of the party.

Mrs. Morton and Roger instructed Gretchen how to reach Staten Island where her friends lived and then they got into the car and sped toward home.

Katharine did not seem so much at ease as she had done when she played hostess to the Ethels at Fort Edward. She was accustomed to meeting many people, but she was an only child and being plunged into a big family, all chattering at once, it seemed to her, caused her some embarrassment. In an effort not to show it she was not always happy in her remarks.

"Is this your car?" she asked.

"It's Grandmother Emerson's," replied Ethel Brown. "She lets us have it very often."

"I don't care for a touring car in cold weather. My grandmother has a limousine."

"We're glad to have a ride in any kind of car," responded Ethel Blue happily.

"Roger, get out that other rug for Katharine," directed Mrs. Morton, "she's chilly."

"Oh, no," demurred Katharine, now ashamed at having made a remark that seemed to reflect upon the comfort of her friends' automobile. "I'm used to a Ford, any way."

"I'm afraid you don't know much about cars if you do come from an automobile city," commented Roger dryly. "This car would make about three Fords—though I don't sneeze at a Ford myself. I'd be mighty glad if we had one, wouldn't you, Mother?"

Mrs. Morton shook her head at him, and he subsided, humming merrily,

He took four spools and an old tin can
And called it a Ford and the strange thing ran.

The Ethels had not paid much attention to the conversation but nevertheless it had struck the wrong note and no one felt entirely at ease. They found themselves wondering whether their guest would find her room to her liking and they remembered uneasily that they had said "I guess she won't mind" this and that when they had left some of their belongings in the closet.

The Morton's house was not large and in order to accommodate a guest the Ethels moved upstairs into a tiny room in the attic, where they were to camp for the fortnight of Katharine's stay. They

had thought it great fun, and were more than willing to endure the discomfort of crowded quarters for the sake of having the long-desired visit. Now, however, Ethel Brown murmured to Ethel Blue as they went into the house, "I'm glad we had one of the beds taken upstairs; it will give her more space," and Ethel Blue replied, "I believe we can hang our dancing school dresses in the east corner of the attic if we put a sheet around them."

Indeed, Ethel Blue made a point of running upstairs while Katharine was speaking to Dorothy in the living room and removing the dresses from the closet. She looked around the room with new sight. It had seemed pleasant and bright to her in the morning when she and Ethel Brown had added some last touches to the fresh muslin equipment of the bureau, but now she wished that they had had a perfectly new bureau cover, and she was sorry she had not asked Mary to give the window another cleaning although it had been washed only a few days before.

"Perhaps she won't notice," she murmured hopefully, but in her heart of hearts she was pretty sure she would.

Katharine made no comment, however, beyond lifted eyebrows when she noticed anything different from what she had been accustomed to in a house where there was a small family, and, in consequence, plenty of space. She unpacked her trunk and hung up her clothes with care and neatness which the Ethels admired. Ordinarily they would have praised her frankly for doing well what they sometimes failed to do well, but they had not yet recovered from the constraint that her remarks on the way home had thrown over them. It was not lessened when she mentioned that usually Gretchen did her unpacking for her.

"Mary would love to unpack for us," said Ethel Brown, "but if she did that we'd have to do some of her work, so we'd rather hang up our duds ourselves."

Katharine was greatly interested in the Club plans for the Glen Point orphans. She had lived in garrisons in the remote West and in or near large cities, but her experience never had placed her in a comparatively small town like Rosemont or Glen Point where people took a friendly interest in each other and in community institutions. She entered heartily into the final preparations for the imitation Christmas Ship and she and the girls forgot their mutual embarrassment in their work for some one else.

Roger went to Glen Point in the morning of the day before Christmas to meet the other Club boys and build the Ship in the hall of the orphanage. They worked there for several hours and lunched with James and Margaret at the Hancocks'. The rest of the Mortons and Katharine took over the parcels in the early afternoon in the car and arranged them on the deck as had been planned, and then all the young people came back together, for they were to have a part in the lighting of the Rosemont Christmas Tree.

The tree was a huge Norway spruce and it was set up in front of the high school which had a lawn before it large enough to hold a goodly crowd of observers. The choirs of all the churches had volunteered their services for the occasion. They were placed on a stand elevated above the crowd so that they could lead the singing and be heard at a distance.

Except for murmurs of admiration and a long-drawn breath of delight there was no sound from the throng. It was too beautiful for speech; the

meaning was too laden with brotherly love and cheer for it to be mistaken. A sad-eyed girl smiled to herself and gazed with new hope in her face; a pickpocket took his hand out of his neighbor's bag that had opened like magic under his practised touch. Babies stretched out their arms to the glitter; grown men stared silently with unaccustomed tears wetting their eyes. The school children sang on and on, "Oh, come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant;" then "Hark, the herald angels sing, Glory to the new-born King;" and "It came upon the midnight clear." The fresh young voices rang gloriously, strengthened by the more mature voices of the choirs.

The stars were coming out before the first person turned away, and all through the night watchers of the tree's resplendent glory were found by the patrolling policeman gazing, gazing, with thoughts of peace reflected on faces that had long been unknown to peace.

It was after six when the Emerson car whirled the U. S. C. back to the Mortons' for a dinner that had to be eaten hastily, for they were due at the Glen Point orphanage soon after seven so that all might be in order for the doors to be opened to the children at half past. Helen was always urging punctuality as Tom was commanding promptness.

"If we were small youngsters and had had to wait all day for our Christmas party we'd be wild at having it delayed a minute longer than necessary," the President insisted, and Tom added his usual exhortation, "Run the thing along briskly; don't let it drag. You can 'put over' lots of stupid stuff by rushing it on gayly, and a good 'stunt' may be good for nothing if it goes slowly."

"Helen and Tom can't say that they 'never sing the old, old songs,' can they?" laughed Ethel Brown.

"The Club has never done anything yet that we haven't heard these same sweet strains from both of them."

"You're very likely to hear them again—my chant, any way," declared her sister firmly.

"It won't do us any harm," Ethel Brown yielded good-naturedly.

The boys had made the good ship *Jason* with some ingenuity. The matron had let them have a table, long and so old that the marks of boots upon it would do no harm. This was important for it was to be used as the forward deck. Because in the days of its youth it had been used in the dining room of the smaller children it was lower than an ordinary table. This made it just the right height, for the ship's rail was to rise above it, and if it had been higher the people on the floor could not have seen the deck comfortably.

At the end of the table was tied the mast—a broom stick with electric light wires strung with tiny bulbs going from its top to the deck. This electrical display was a contribution from Roger who had asked his grandfather to give it to him for his Christmas gift and had requested that he might have it in time for him to lend it to the *Jason*. It was run by a storage battery hidden in a box that was safely bestowed under the deck. Aft of the main-mast were two kitchen chairs placed side by side to give the craft the needed length.

The outside of the boat was made by stretching a double length of war-gray cambric from the bow —two hammock stretchers fastened to the end of the table—along the deck, past the chairs and across their end. The cloth was raised a trifle above the deck by laths nailed on to the edge of the table. The name, "Jason," in black letters, was pinned along the bow.

"It isn't a striking likeness of a boat," confessed Roger, "but any intelligent person would be able to guess what it was meant to be."

When the children and a few other people who had begged to be allowed to come entered the hall they found the ship lighted and with its deck piled high with wooden boxes and parcels of good size. The members of the U. S. C. were gathered beside the ship. When all had entered Helen, as president of the Club, mounted one of the chairs which represented the after part of the boat and told the story of the real ship *Jason*.

"Children from all over the United States sent Christmas gifts to the European children who otherwise would not have any because of the war. Tonight we are going to pretend that we are all sailing on the *Jason* to carry the gifts to Europe. We've all got to help—every one of us. First of all we want a captain. I think that boy over there near the door will be the captain, because he's the tallest boy I see here."

Embarrassed but pleased the tall boy came forward and Della fastened on his arm a band marked CAPTAIN. Following instructions he mounted the chair from which Helen descended. Two under officers were chosen in the same way, and the Ethels raised them to the ranks of first and second lieutenants by the simple method of fastening on suitable arm bands.

"Now we want some sailors," cried Roger, and he selected ten other boys, who were all rapidly adorned with SAILOR bands by the U. S. C. gifts. The ship was about as full as she could be now, with her officers standing, one on the deck and the others on the two chairs, and the sailors manning the rail. Everybody was beginning to enjoy the game by this time, and the faces that looked out over the gray

cambric sides of the *Jason* were beaming with eagerness to find out what was coming next, while the children who had not yet been assigned to any task were equally curious to find out how they were to help.

"Now we're on the pier at the Bush Terminal at Brooklyn," explained Tom. "Look out there; don't get in the way of the ropes," and he pushed the crowd back from the imaginary ropes, and whistled a shrill call on his fingers.

"See, she's moving! She's starting!" cried Ethel Blue. "Wave your handkerchief! Wave it!" she directed the children near her, who fell into the spirit of the pretense and gave the Christmas Ship a noisy send-off.

"Now we'll all turn our backs while the ship is crossing the Atlantic," directed James.

It required only a minute for the boat to make the crossing, and when the onlookers turned about after this trip of unparalleled swiftness they were told that now they were not Americans any longer; they were English people at Devonport gathered to watch the arrival of the *Jason* and to help unload the presents sent to the children of England and Belgium.

"I want some longshoremen to help unload these boxes," said Helen, "and a set of sorters and a set of distributors. Who'll volunteer as longshoremen?"

There was a quick response, and this group exhausted all the boys. They were designated by arm bands each marked LONGSHOREMAN. Then she called for girls for the other two detachments and divided them into two sections, one marked SORTERS and the other DISTRIBUTORS.

Under Roger's direction a chair, turned over on

its face, made a sloping gangplank down which the bundles could be slid.

"Have your lieutenants place their men around the deck and on each side of this plank," he instructed the captain. "Then order a few longshoremen to go aboard and hand the bundles from one to another and slide them down the plank to the men on the pier who will take them over to the sorters. You," he called to the girls, "you stay at that side of the room and open these large parcels when they are brought to you, and you read what it says on the packages and make two piles, one of those marked 'Boy' and the other of those marked 'Girl'. Then there are bundles marked with the children's names. Give them out. See that everybody has one package marked with his name and one package just marked 'Boy' or 'Girl'."

The Ethels had proposed this arrangement so that all the children should feel that the distribution of gifts had been made by chance. The parcels bearing the children's names were filled with candy and goodies and were all alike.

"Didn't I tell you they'd like foolishnesses!" she said to Helen in an undertone. "Look at those boys with jumping jacks. They love them!"

"See those youngsters with those silly twirling things Tom made," said Della. "He's right about the charm of those little flat objects. They'll twirl them by the hour I really believe."

All the gifts were of the simplest sort. There were the Danish twins that Ethel Blue had made for the real Ship—little worsted elves fastened together by a cord; and rubber balls covered with crocheting to make them softer; dolls, small and inexpensive, but each with an outfit of clothes that would take off; a stuffed kitten or two; several baskets, each with a roll of ribbon in it.

"They can fit them up for work baskets afterwards, if they want to," said Margaret, "but I'm not going to suggest sewing to these youngsters who have to do it every day of their lives whether they want to or not."

There were various kinds of candy in boxes covered with bright colored and flowered paper, for James had outdone himself in developing new pasting ideas. There were cookies, too, and tiny fruit cakes.

The faces of the Club members were as joyous as the faces of the children as they looked about them and saw evidences of the success of their plan. If they needed confirmation it was given them by the matron.

"I've never seen them so happy," she said. "I can't thank you enough for giving them this pleasure."

"It was lovely," approved Katharine. "I'm so glad you let me help."

It was still early when the merry party reached home, but Mrs. Morton bundled them off to bed promptly.

"You've all made a sacrifice to Dicky's Christmas habits," she explained. "He's been in bed for hours and he's preparing to get up long before dawn, so we all might as well go to bed ourselves or we'll be exhausted by this time to-morrow night."

"Hang your stocking on your outside door knob, Katharine," cried the Ethels. "We have Santa Claus trained to look there for it in this house."

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTMAS DAY

MRS. MORTON'S prophecy was fulfilled. It was still black night when Dicky roused from his bed and sent a "Merry Christmas" ringing through the house. There was no response to his first cry, but, undaunted, he uttered a second. To this there came a faint "Merry Christmas" from the top story where the Ethels were snuggled under the roof, and another from Helen's room beside his own. Katharine said nothing and not a word came from Roger, though there was a sound of heavy, regular breathing through his door.

"Let's put on our wrappers and go down stairs into Katharine's room," suggested Ethel Brown.

"It's lots too early. Let's wait a while," replied Ethel Blue, so they lay still for another hour in spite of increasing sounds of ecstasy from Dicky. After all they decided to follow the usual family custom and take their stockings into the living room before breakfast instead of going to Katharine's room. As they passed her door they knocked on it and begged her to hurry so that they could all begin the opening at once. She said that she was up and would soon join them, but it proved to be fully three quarters of an hour before she appeared.

All the Mortons except Dicky had waited for her before opening their bundles.

"We thought you would excuse Dicky for not waiting; it's rather hard on a small boy to have such tantalizing parcels right before him and not attack them," apologized Mrs. Morton.

Katharine looked somewhat embarrassed to find that she had been the cause of so long a delay but she offered no excuse.

"Let's all look at our stockings first," said Ethel

Brown, and every hand dived in and brought out candy, nuts, raisins, an apple, an orange, dates and figs and candy animals.

There were gifts among the goodies, or instructions where to find them. Roger discovered a pocket book that had been his desire for a long time, and a card that advised him to look under the desk in the library and see what was waiting for him. He dashed off in a high state of curiosity and came back whooping, with a typewriter in his arms.

"Aren't Grandfather and Grandmother the best ever!" he exclaimed rapturously, and he paid no further attention to his other gifts or to those of the rest of the family while he hunted out a small table and arranged the machine for immediate action.

Helen's chief presents were a ring with a small pearl, from her grandmother and a set of Stevenson from her grandfather. The Ethels had each a tennis racquet and each a desk of a size suitable for their bedroom.

"They'll go one on each side of the window," exclaimed Ethel Brown, while Ethel Blue at once began to store away in hers the supply of stationery that came with it.

Katharine's gifts were quite as numerous as the Mortons', for her mother had forwarded to Mrs. Morton's care all those of suitable size that came to Buffalo for her. She opened one after another books, hair ribbons, a pair of silk stockings for dancing school, a tiny silver watch on a long chain. Mr. and Mrs. Emerson had added to her store a racquet like the Ethels'.

More numerous than those of any of the others were Dicky's presents, and they were varied, indeed. A velocipede was his grandfather's offering and was

received with shouts of delight. Blocks of a new sort occupied him when his mother stopped his travels on three wheels. A train of cars made its way under Katharine's feet and nearly threw her down, to her intense disgust, and a pair of roller skates brought Dicky himself in her way so often that she spoke to him more sharply than he had ever been spoken to in his life. He drew away and stared at her solemnly.

"You're a cross girl," he announced after a disconcerting pause, and Katharine flushed deeply at the accusation, realizing that it was not polite to rebuke your hostess's brother and regretting her hasty speech.

"Are you good for a long walk?" Roger asked Katharine after breakfast.

Katharine said she was.

"Then help me do up these things for Grandfather and Grandmother and we'll be off," and he threw down a handful of red paper and green ribbon and ran to get the shears.

Roger and Helen together had given Grandfather Emerson a whole desk set, Roger hammering the metal and Helen providing and making up the pad and roller blotter and ink bottle. It was a handsome set. The blotter was green and the Ethels had made a string basket out of which came the end of a ball of green twine, and a set of filing envelopes, neatly arranged in a portfolio of heavy green cardboard.

All of the family had helped make the Chautauqua scrapbook that was Mrs. Emerson's principal gift from her grandchildren. Helen had written the story of their summer at Chautauqua, Roger had typed it on a typewriter at school, and the others had chosen and pasted the pictures that illustrated it. Ethel Blue had added an occasional drawing of

her own when their kodaks gave out or they were unable to find anything in old magazines that would answer their purpose, and the effect was excellent. Katharine looked it over with the greatest interest.

"Here you are, all of you, going over from Westfield to Chautauqua in the trolley," she exclaimed, for she had made the same trip herself.

"And here are the chief officers of Chautauqua Institution—Bishop Vincent and some of the others."

"And here's the Spelling Match—my, that Amphitheatre is an enormous place!"

"This is the hydro-aeroplane that we flew in, Ethel Brown and I."

"These are different buildings on the grounds—I recognize them. This is a splendid present," complimented Katharine.

"It was heaps of fun making it. Did you notice this picture of Mother's and Grandfather's class on Recognition Day? See, there's Mother herself. She happened to be in the right spot when the photographer snapped."

"How lucky for you! It's perfect. I know Mrs. Emerson will be awfully pleased."

"We hope she will. Are you infants ready?" and Roger swung the parcels on to his back and opened the door for the girls.

"We're going to stop at Dorothy's, aren't we?" asked Ethel Blue.

"Certainly we are. We want to see her presents and to give Elisabeth hers and to say 'Merry Christmas' to Aunt Louise and Miss Merriam."

"You seem very fond of Miss Merriam," said Katharine to Ethel Brown as they turned the corner into Church Street.

"We are. She's splendid. She knows just what to do for Elisabeth and she's lovely any way."

"You act as if she belonged to the family."

"Why shouldn't we?" asked Ethel in amazement.

"Don't you pay her for taking care of the baby?"

"Certainly we pay her. We'd pay a doctor for taking care of her, too, only we happen to have two doctors related to the Club so they give us their services free. Why shouldn't we pay her?"

Ethel Brown was quite breathless. She could not entirely understand Katharine's point of view, but she seemed to be hinting that Miss Merriam was serving in a menial capacity. The idea made loyal Ethel Brown, who had not a snobbish bone in her body, extremely angry. Service she understood—her father and her uncle and Katharine's father, too, for that matter, were serving their country and were under orders. One kind of service might be less responsible than another kind, but that any service that was honest and useful could be unworthy was not in her creed.

"No reason, of course," replied Katharine, who saw that she had offended Ethel. "Any way, her work is more than a nursemaid's work."

"I should say it was," answered Ethel warmly; "she's taken several years' training to fit her for it. But even if she were just a nursemaid I should love her. I love Mary. She was Dicky's nurse and Mother says she saved him from becoming a sick, nervous child by her wisdom and calmness. Mary's skilful, too."

Katharine did not pursue the discussion, and Ethel Brown, when Miss Merriam came into the room to wish them a "Merry Christmas," threw her arms around her neck and kissed her.

"You're a perfectly splendid person," she exclaimed.

Elisabeth was at her very best this morning. Never before had they seen her so beaming. She

had a special smile for every one of them, so that each felt that he had been singled out for favors. She shook hands with Roger, walked a few steps, clinging to the Ethels' fingers, patted Helen's cheek, rippled all over when Dicky danced before her, and even permitted Katharine to take her on her lap. This was a concession on Katharine's part as well as on Elisabeth's, for Katharine was not much interested in a stray baby. She saw, however, that the Mortons all were in love with the little creature so she did her best to be amiable toward her.

"You're all so good to me," she cried. "I love all these things that you've made for me with your own fingers."

"We'd do more than that if we could," answered Ethel Blue as they all, including Dorothy, swept out of the front door to take up their journey to the Emersons'.

At the Emersons' there was a renewal of greetings and "Thank yous" and laughter, and a rehearsing of all the gifts that had been received. Mrs. Smith had sent Mrs. Emerson an unusual pair of richly decorated wax candles which she had found at an Italian candlemaker's in New York, and Miss Merriam had sent her and Mrs. Morton each a tiny brass censer and a supply of charcoal and Japanese incense to make fragrant the house.

"Mother gave us handkerchiefs all around," said Roger, "and Mary baked us each a cake and the cook made candy enough for an army."

"You're dining at your Aunt Louise's, dear?"

"We're going right from here to carry some bundles for Mother and then to church, and then to Aunt Louise's for an early dinner. After dinner we are to call on the old ladies at the Home for a half hour and then we go back to a tree for Dicky—just

a little shiny one; we've had all our presents. After supper the thing we're going to do is a secret."

"That sounds like a program that will keep you busy while it lasts. They're not tiring you out, I hope?" Mr. Emerson asked Katharine, who listened to Roger's list without displaying much enthusiasm.

"I'm enjoying it all very much," responded Katharine politely, but not in a tone that carried conviction.

"How would it please you if the car took you back and helped you carry those parcels for your mother?"

There was a general whoop of satisfaction.

"Your grandmother and I are going to church, but we won't mind starting earlier than we usually do."

"Which means right now, I should say," said Roger, looking at his watch.

At the Mortons' the car added Mrs. Morton and Dicky to its occupants and several large baskets containing Christmas dinners for people in whom the Mortons had an interest. The young Mortons all had had a hand in packing these baskets and in adding a touch of holly and red ribbon at the top to give them a holiday appearance.

"This first one is for old Mrs. Jameson," Mrs. Morton explained to her mother. "Everything in it is already cooked because she is almost blind and cooking is harder for her than it is for most people. There is a roast chicken and the vegetables are all done and put in covered bowls packed around with excelsior so that their heat won't be lost."

"Like a fireless cooker."

"The Ethels and Dorothy made enough individual fruit cakes for all our baskets, and we've put in hard pudding sauce so that they can be eaten as puddings instead of cakes."

"The girls have made candies and cookies for everybody. That basket for the Flynns has enough cookies for eight children besides the father and mother."

"If their appetites are like Roger's there must be a good many dozen cookies stowed away there."

"You can see it's the largest of all," laughed Mrs. Morton.

Roger played Santa Claus at each house and his merry face and pleasant jokes brought smiles to faces that did not look happy when their owners opened their doors. The Flynns' was the last stop and everybody in the car laughed when all the Flynns who could walk, and that meant nine of them, fairly boiled out of the door to receive the visitor. Roger jumped the small fry and joked with the larger ones, and left them all in a high state of excitement.

It was a very merry party that gathered around the Smiths' table, the largest dinner party that Dorothy and her mother had given since they came to Rosemont to live after they had met their unknown Morton relatives at Chautauqua the summer before. To Mrs. Smith it gave the greatest happiness to see the children of her brothers sitting at her table and to know that her sister-in-law was her very dear friend as well as her relative by marriage.

After dinner they all snapped costume crackers and adorned themselves with the caps that they discovered inside them, and they set the new Victrola going and danced the butterfly dance that they had learned at Chautauqua and had given at their entertainment for the Christmas Ship. Dusk was coming on when the Ethels said that they must go to the Old Ladies' Home or they would have to run all the way. Grandfather Emerson offered

to whirl all of them over in the car, and they were glad to accept the offer.

They stopped at home to get the boxes of candy which they had prepared. It was while they were running up stairs to gather them together that Katharine asked Ethel Blue if Mary might press a dress for her.

"I want to wear it this evening," she said.

Ethel Blue gasped. Mary had not yet come back from Mrs. Smith's where she had served dinner for the large party and was still occupied in clearing up after it. Supper at home was yet to come. Mrs. Morton had always urged upon the girls to be very careful about asking to have extra services rendered at inconvenient hours, and a more inconvenient time than this hardly could have been selected.

"Why, I don't know," Ethel Blue hesitated.

"Oh, if you don't care to have her—" replied Katharine stiffly.

"It isn't that," returned Ethel miserably. "Mary's always willing to do things for us, but you see she's had a hard day and it isn't over yet and she won't have any holiday at all if she has to do this."

"Very well," returned Katharine in a tone that made Ethel feel that her friend considered that she was being discourteous to her guest. "I can find something else to wear this evening, I suppose."

She looked so like a martyr that Ethel was most unhappy.

"If you'll let me try it, I can use the stove in our own little kitchen," she offered, referring to the small room where Mrs. Morton allowed the girls to cook so that they should not be in the way of the servants.

"No, indeed, I could not think of letting you," responded Katharine.

"I don't know that I could do it. I never have pressed anything nice—but I'd like to try if you'll trust me."

"No, indeed," repeated Katharine, and the girls entered the automobile each in a state of mental discomfort, Katharine because she felt that she was not being treated with proper consideration, and Ethel Blue because she had been obliged to refuse the request of a friend and guest. The ride to the Home was uncomfortably silent. On Roger's part the cause was turkey, but the girls were quiet for other reasons.

The visit to the old ladies was not long. They distributed their packages and wished everybody a "Merry Christmas" and shook hands with their especial favorites and ran back to the car.

The supper was not really a party meal. It merely served as a gathering place for the U. S. C. before they went to the Christmas tree at the church. It also served as a background for Dick's little shining tree. This small tree had been a part of Dick's Christmas ever since he had had a Christmas, and to him it was quite as important as his dinner, although there never were any presents on it.

It stood now on a small table at the side of the dining room. It was lighted by means of the storage battery and the strings of tiny electric lights that had been used for the Christmas Ship at the Glen Point orphanage. There were all sorts of balls and tinsel wreaths and tiny, glistening cords. It glowed merrily while the supper went on, Dicky, at intervals of five minutes, calling everybody's attention to its beauties. There were favors at each plate, each a joke of some sort on the person who received it. Every one held up his toy for the rest to see and each provoked a peal of laughter.

CHAPTER VII

NEW YEAR'S EVE

"WHERE is Katharine?" asked Mrs. Morton of the Ethels as Mary announced luncheon on the day before New Year's.

"She went over to Dorothy's. Shall I call her?"

"Give her a minute or two. She knows the luncheon hour," replied Katharine's hostess.

But a minute or two and more passed and no Katharine appeared.

"She must be lunching with Dorothy," suggested Ethel Blue.

"I'm sure Dorothy would have telephoned to ask if we had any plans that would interfere."

"It's twenty minutes past the hour; you'd better call and see if she's still there," said Mrs. Morton, "and we may as well sit down."

Helen was still at the telephone and the family was seated when Katharine came in.

"You didn't wait for me," she remarked with apparent surprise.

"Of course you didn't realize that the luncheon hour had struck," Mrs. Morton apologized for her. "Helen is calling Dorothy now to inquire about you."

Katharine made no reply and sat down with the injured air that she was in the habit of wearing when she thought that not sufficient deference had been paid her. She offered no apology or explanation and seemed to think, if any conclusion could be drawn from her manner, that she had a grievance instead of Mrs. Morton, whose family arrangements were continually being upset by her guest's dilatoriness and lack of consideration. The visit which had been looked forward to with such delight was not proving successful. For themselves the

Ethels did not mind occasional delays, but they knew that all such matters interfered with the smooth running of the house, and they could not help wondering that Katharine should seem to think that her hostess should rearrange the daily routine to suit her.

The evening meal was to be supper and not dinner and it was to be especially early because it was to be cooked entirely by the young people. The Hancocks and the Watkinses were at the Mortons' by five o'clock. Dr. Watkins came out, too, by special invitation, but he asked if he might be permitted to pay a visit to Elisabeth while the rest were preparing the meal, in view of the fact that he was not skilled as a cook, and felt himself to be too old to learn in one lesson. He was allowed to go with strict injunctions to be back at half past six and to bring Miss Merriam with him.

The Ethels had planned beforehand what they were going to have for supper and the part that each was to take in the preparations.

When the aprons had been taken off and the guests were all seated at the table the supper went swimmingly. The oysters were delicious, the salad sufficiently "chunky" to please Roger, the biscuits as light as a feather and the fruit mélange as good to look at as if it was to eat.

The table decorations hinted at the New Year that was upon them. High in a belfry made of small sticks piled on each other criss-cross hung a small bell. Silver cords ran from it to each place so that every guest might in turn "Ring out the old, ring in the new." Beside the tower on one side stood the Old Year bending with the weight of his twelve-month of experience; on the other side was the fresh New Year, too young to know experience. Both were dolls dressed by Dorothy and Ethel Blue.

"I move you, Madam President," said Tom when the meal was nearly over, "that we extend a vote of thanks to the cooks for this delicious nourishment."

"I was just on the point of making that motion," laughed Edward Watkins.

"And I of seconding it," cried Miss Merriam. "It would come more appropriately from us."

"You were far too slow," retorted Tom. "I couldn't wait for you."

"As the president was one of the cooks she ought to place some one else in the chair to put a motion complimentary in part to herself, but as the maker of the motion and the seconder were also cooks we're all in the same box and I don't believe it's necessary. All in favor say 'Aye'."

A shout of "Ayes" followed.

"Contrary minded."

Silence.

"Madam President."

"Mrs. Morton has the floor."

"I don't want to seem inhospitable, but if you're going to reach the Atwoods' on time you'd better be starting."

There was a general scattering and a donning of outer garments. The boys picked up the bags and the Club started for the bridge, Dr. Watkins and Miss Merriam going with them.

When the Ethels had called on Mrs. Atwood and had asked her if the Club might visit her on New Year's Eve the old lady had been not only surprised but somewhat alarmed. She grew more cordial, however, when Ethel Brown explained it to her.

"Would you mind our asking some of our friends?"

"Not at all. We'd be glad to do the few small things that we've planned for just as many people as you can get in here."

"That isn't many," replied Mrs. Atwood, looking about her sitting room. "But there's one of my neighbors hardly ever gets to the stores or to a movie show, and I'd love to ask her in; and there's another one is just getting up from a sickness."

So the room was quite filled with guests when the Club members arrived.

"That's the boy that hung my gate for me last year the day after Hallowe'en," whispered one old woman as Roger made his way through the room, and several of them said, "Those are the young folks that went round after the regular Hallowe'en party this year and put back the signs and things the other people had pulled down."

The audience was so much larger than the Club had expected that Helen, as president, felt called upon to make a short explanation.

"We're very glad to see you here," she said, "but we don't want you to expect anything elaborate from us. We've just come to entertain our friends for a short time in a simple way. So please be kind to us."

Helen was wearing a pale pink dress that was extremely becoming, and her cheeks were flushed when she realized that these people had seen or heard of their more pretentious undertakings and might be expecting something similar from them now.

There was a reassuring nodding all over the room, and then the young people began their performance. Edward Watkins first played on the violin, giving some familiar airs with such spirit that toes went tapping as he drew his bow back and forth.

Dorothy followed him with Kipling's "I Keep Six Honest Serving Men." The music was Edward German's, and Helen played the accompaniment on

Mrs. Atwood's little organ. The introduction was spirited and then Dorothy sang softly.

Dicky's turn came next on the program. He was introduced as the Honorary Member of the United Service Club, and the name of the poem that he was to recite was given as "Russian and Turk."

"We don't know who wrote these verses," Helen explained.

Dicky was helped to the top of a box which served as a stage and bobbed his bobbed hair at the audience by way of a bow. Every S he pronounced TH, which added to the pleasure of the hearers of the following lines:

There was a Russian came over the sea,
Just when the war was growing hot;
And his name it was Tjalikavakaree—
Karindobrolikanahudarot—
Shibkadirova—
Ivarditztova
Sanilik
Danevik
Varagobhot.

Dicky rattled off these names and two other similar stanzas with astonishing glibness to the amazement of his hearers. His first public appearance with the Club was undeniably a success.

The next number on the program necessitated the disappearance behind a sheet drawn across the end of the room of almost all the members of the Club. Helen, who was making the announcements, stayed outside. A light came into view behind the curtain and the lights in the room were put out.

"This is the last day of the year," began Helen when a muffled whisper had told her that all was ready, "and everybody is eager to know what is going to happen next year. We all would like to

know, how the war is going to turn out, and what is going to be the result of the troubles in Mexico, and whether Rosemont will get its new park—"

She was interrupted by laughter, for Rosemont's new park was still a live subject although it never seemed to approach settlement one way or the other.

"What you are going to see now on the screen we call 'Prophecies.' The poet Campbell said that 'Coming events cast their shadows before,' and we might take that line for our motto. The first prophecy is one of trouble. It comes to almost every person at one time or another of his life."

Silence fell on the darkened room. On the sheet came the figure of Dicky. It was recognized by all and greeted with a round of applause. He looked around him as if hunting for something; then seized what was unmistakably a jam pot and began to eat from it with a spoon. His figure grew larger and larger and faded away as he walked back toward the light and disappeared beyond it. In his place came the figure of Edward Watkins, and those who knew that he was a doctor and those who guessed it from his physician's bag understood that his appearance was prophetic of Dicky's deliverance from the suffering caused by jam.

The light behind the sheet was moved close to the curtain while the table and chairs were set in place. When it went back to its proper spot there were seen the silhouettes of a group of men sitting around the table arguing earnestly.

"This," said Helen, "is the Rosemont Board of Aldermen talking about the park."

The argument grew excited. One man sprang to his feet and another thumped the table with his fist. Suddenly they all threw back their heads and laughed, rose and left the stage arm in arm.

"They're wondering why they never agreed before," Helen decided. "It's the Spring getting into their bones; and here are some of the people who are benefited by the park."

The table and chairs disappeared and a bench took their place. There followed a procession of folk apparently passing through the park. A workman, shovel and pick over his shoulder, stopped to look up at the trees. That was James. A young man and his sweetheart—Roger and Ethel Brown—strolled slowly along. Dicky rolled a hoop. Margaret, carrying a baby borrowed from the audience, sat down on a bench and put it to sleep.

The onlookers approved highly of this prophecy which was of a state of affairs which they all wanted.

"The other day," went on Helen in her gentle voice, "I found a prophecy that was not written for this war but for another, yet it is just as true for the great war that is devastating the homes and hearts of men to-day. It was written by Miss Bates who wrote 'America the Beautiful,' which we all sing in school, and it is called 'The Great Twin Brethren.' You remember that the Great Twin Brethren were Castor and Pollux. They were regarded as gods by the Romans. They fought for the Romans in the battle of Lake Regillus, and the high priest said about it, according to Macaulay:

> Back comes the Chief in triumph
> Who, in the hour of fight,
> Hath seen the Great Twin Brethren
> In harness on his right.

These are the divine helpers to whom Miss Bates refers in her poem."

On the screen there came into view the shadows

of Castor and Pollux dressed like Roman knights—with a corselet over a loose shirt, a short plaited skirt, greaves to protect their legs, a helmet on the head and a spear in the hand. While Ethel Brown, who had stepped forward, read the poem, the two figures—really Roger and Tom, who were nearly of a height—stood motionless. As it ended they glided backward and faded from view.

THE GREAT TWIN BRETHREN

The battle will not cease
Till once again on those white steeds ye ride
O Heaven-descended Twins,
Before Humanity's bewildered host.
Our javelins
Fly wide,
And idle is our cannon's boast.
Lead us, triumphant Brethren, Love and Peace.

A fairer Golden Fleece
Our more adventurous Argo fain would seek,
But save, O Sons of Jove,
Your blended light go with us, vain employ
It were to rove
This bleak
Blind waste. To unimagined joy
Guide us, immortal Brethren, Love and Peace.

These beautiful lines were read with great seriousness and their profound meaning went to the hearts of the hearers. Its gravity was counterbalanced by the next prophecy which gave hope of immediate fulfilment. Across the screen passed a procession of Club members, the first carrying a plate full of something that proved to be doughnuts when one was held up so that its hole was visible. The second person in the row bore a basket heaped high with apples, the third a dish of cookies. Then

came more doughnuts, nuts and raisins, corn balls, and oranges. The lights were turned on, and the silhouettes, changed by simple magic into laughing boys and girls, passed among the people distributing their eatables. Every one had a word of praise for them. The Atwoods, for whom the effort had been made, said little, but shook hands almost tearfully with each performer.

At home they found a rousing fire and something to eat awaiting them, with Mrs. Morton smiling a cheerful welcome. They sat before the fire and cracked nuts and ate apples until the chimes rang their notice that 1927 was vanishing into the past and giving way to the New Year of hope and promise. Clasping hands they stood quite still until the chimes stopped and the slow strokes of the town clock fell on their ears. With the last they broke into the hymn:

Now a new year opens,
  Now we newly turn
To the holy Saviour,
  Lessons fresh to learn.

CHAPTER VIII

KATHERINE LEAVES

KATHARINE ended her visit a few days later and returned to Buffalo under the care of Gretchen. She was escorted to the train, but the farewells of the Morton's were not intermixed with expressions of regret at her departure. She had not been a considerate guest and she had not seemed appreciative of efforts that had been made especially to give her pleasure.

It was on the way to the Atwoods' on New Year's Eve. Katharine and Della were walking together.

"It must be rather awful," said Katharine, "to have a family scandal such as the Morton's have."

"A family scandal!" repeated Della. "What do you mean?"

"About Dorothy. Her father was shot, you know."

"I know. But it wasn't a scandal. It was awful for Mrs. Smith and Dorothy but there was nothing scandalous about it—nothing at all. Dorothy has spoken to me about it quite frankly."

"She has?" returned Katharine skeptically. "I shouldn't think she would want to."

"I could see that it was very painful for her; but I think she and the Mortons, too, would be much more pained now if they knew that a guest was discussing their affairs."

Katharine dropped Della's arm and the two girls hardly spoke during the remainder of Katharine's stay.

When weeks passed and no "bread and butter letter" came from Katharine to thank Mrs. Morton and the family, the rudeness set the capstone to her sins against hospitality.

"Any letter from Katharine?" became a daily

question from Roger when he came in from school and when he received a negative he sometimes opened his lips as if to say something in condemnation.

"Take care," his mother warned him when this happened; "because a guest makes mistakes is no reason that her host should copy them."

With the coming of the new year the younger people all settled down to serious work. Not only Roger but James and Tom also were to graduate in June, and all of them wanted to do themselves credit. James was going to Harvard and later to the Harvard Medical School. Tom was booked for Yale and then for business.

CHAPTER IX

VALENTINE'S DAY

It was the day after Lincoln's birthday, and Saturday. Edward Watkins had come out for his weekly visit to Elisabeth and was sitting in Mrs. Smith's living room surveying her and talking to Miss Merriam. Elisabeth was walking with a fair degree of steadiness now, and made her way about all the rooms of the house without assistance. She still preferred to crawl upstairs and she could do that so fast that the person who was supposed to watch her had to be faithful or she would disappear while an eye lingered too long on the page of an interesting book or on the face of a friend.

Downstairs Edward leaned forward from his chair in front of Gertrude and picked up the ball from which she was knitting a soldier's scarf. He paid out the yarn to her as she needed it.

"You're happy here, aren't you?" he asked softly.

"Happy! I should say so! Next to having your very own home I can't imagine anything lovelier than this, with dear people and a pretty house and a darling baby. It's beautiful."

"You'd hate to leave it, wouldn't you?"

"Leave it? Why should I leave it? I think they like me. I think they want me to stay."

She looked at him piercingly, evidently disturbed at the suggestion.

"Want you to stay! I should think they would!" ejaculated the young physician. "I was just wondering what inducement would make you leave these dear people and this pretty house and this darling baby. If any one should—"

"Hullo," cried Ethel Brown, entering at this instant. "Do you know where Aunt Louise is?"

"She went out," replied Miss Merriam, somewhat nervously.

"Dorothy has gone to Della's this afternoon to help her get ready for tonight," Ethel said.

"She arrived before I left," admitted Edward—a confession that drew a long look from Gertrude.

"Where's Ayleesabet?"

"Playing under the table," answered Gertrude in cheerful ignorance that Ayleesabet had departed to more stimulating regions over the stairs.

Ethel lifted the table cover to investigate.

"She isn't here."

Gertrude jumped up and the doctor followed her into the hall. Ethel Brown ran into the dining room and then upstairs, with Miss Merriam in pursuit.

It was a moment of relief for everybody when Ethel gave a shout of discovery.

"Here she is!" she called, "and O, what will Dorothy say when she comes back and sees her room!"

"What's the modern way of dealing with that situation?" Edward asked when Miss Merriam re-appeared with Elisabeth under one arm.

"Do you mean ought she to be punished? Why should she? She was only following out her instinct to learn. How could she know that that was a time and place where it would inconvenience somebody else if she did? I'm the one to be punished for letting her have the opportunity."

"I suppose that's true. She'd never learn much if she didn't investigate, would she? And, as you say, she isn't yet conscious that she has any especial duty toward any one else's comfort."

"The Misses Clark are always saying 'No, no,' to her. I should think she'd think of their house as 'No, no Castle'."

"They love her, though," defended Ethel Brown.

"That's why I let her go there. A baby knows

when she's loved and those two old ladies make her feel it even above the 'No, Nos'."

"I went in there yesterday when I saw Elisabeth's carriage outside their door," said Ethel, "and I found the older Miss Clark sitting on the floor clapping her hands and the baby trying to dance and sitting down, bang, every four or five steps."

Elisabeth was in a coquettish mood and played like a kitten with Edward.

"She is the very sweetest thing I ever saw!" exclaimed Ethel Brown. "I do wish I could take her to Washington."

"Take her to Washington! What on earth do you mean?" asked Miss Merriam.

"Nothing, only I hate to go away from her for even a few days. I came over to tell Dorothy that Grandfather Emerson is going to send us all to Washington with Mr. Wheeler's party for Washington's Birthday. Do you think Aunt Louise will let her go?"

"I think it will depend on who are going."

"There'll be lots of older people and teachers from our church and both the other churches, too."

"Any of your mother's particular friends?"

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised if Grandmother and Grandfather went themselves."

"Then your mother won't have any objection."

"That would settle the question for Dorothy, too, I should think," said Edward. "Are you taking outsiders along?"

"Outsiders?"

"New Yorkers. Della and Tom, for instance?"

"Oh, is there any chance of Mrs. Watkins's letting them go?"

"I'll suggest it if you think they'd be welcome."

"I don't see why they wouldn't be. Mr. Wheeler wants to have as many as possible because the more

there are the better rates he can make with the railroad and at the hotel."

"Why don't you stir up the Hancock's?"

"The whole U. S. C.? Why not? It would be just too glorious," and Ethel proceeded to dance her butterfly dance around the room.

"Talk it over this evening," advised Edward, taking up his hat.

"Going?" inquired Ethel.

"I might as well—I mean, I must go, thank you," responded the doctor automatically, for she had said nothing to be thanked for.

It was a charming table around which the Club seated itself at the Watkinses'. Mr. and Mrs. Watkins sat at the head and foot and Della and Tom in the center of the sides.

"I ran in to see the baby a minute before I left," Ethel Blue explained to Mrs. Watkins, "and Dr. Watkins was there and he asked me to tell you that Aunt Louise had invited him to stay to dinner."

"Edward is becoming a very uncertain character, like all doctors," said Edward's mother.

"I think he is," remarked Ethel Brown to Ethel Blue who sat beside her. "He was just saying 'Good-bye' to Miss Gertrude when I left, and he must have stayed on after all."

Everybody had contributed something to the table decorations, but no one had seen them all assembled and they all paid themselves and each other compliments on the prettiness of the various parts and Della and Dorothy on the effectiveness of the whole.

In the center was a glowing centerpiece made of three scarlet paper hearts, each about eight inches high placed with the pointed ends up and the lower corners touching so that they made a three-sided cage over the electric light. From the top a tiny Cupid aimed his arrow at the guests before him.

Della and Tom had designed this warm-hearted lantern.

Half way between the centerpiece and the plates a line of dancing figures ran around the table linked to each other by chains made of wee golden hearts. Ethel Blue had drawn and painted these paper dolls, so that each represented one of the Club members and they served as place cards as well as ornaments.

"I seem to see myself in Miles Standish's armor," said James. "Does that mean that I'm to sit here where I can admire my warlike appearance?"

"It does," said Della, "and I've put Priscilla next you so that for once you can cut out John Alden. Here's John Alden—that's you, Roger, and here's a little Russian for you to take home to Dicky."

"Where am I?"

"And I?"

"And I?" cried one after the other.

"Can't you guess? This is the Muse of History," pointing to a white-robed figure holding a scroll.

"Helen, of course," they all shouted. "And isn't this Hallowe'en witch Ethel Brown?"

"It really looks like her!"

"And what do you guess about this songstress?"

"Dorothy, and the young lady knitting is Della."

"Right."

"I hate to think that that's my face looking out of that cabbage," protested Margaret, "but Ethel Blue has a wonderful ability to catch likenesses."

"That's you, Mrs. Stalk of the Cabbage Patch, just as clearly as if it were your photograph."

"One of these two is mine and the other is for Edward," guessed Tom. "Am I one of the Great Twin Brethren and is Edward's the Pied Piper?"

"Right again. And this is Ayleesabet herself, and the Guardian Angel is Miss Mirriam."

"She *is* an angel, isn't she!" exclaimed Della.

"Look at these dozens of tiny hearts. Ethel Brown cut out those and James made them into the chains."

"Paste, paste," groaned James melodramatically. "My future calling is that of bill-poster."

Everything that could be was pink at the dinner. The soup was tomato bisque, the fish was salmon, the roast was beef, rare, the salad, tomato jelly, the dessert, strawberry ice cream, and with it small cakes heart-shaped and covered with pink icing.

In the drawing room a Cupid whirling on a card pointed with his arrow to a number, and the person who took from Mrs. Watkins's hand the envelope marked with the number indicated was instructed where to look for his valentine. Helen found hers inside of the piano. The Ethels turned up diagonal corners of the rug in the northwest corner of the library and discovered two flat packages. Margaret sought out a small bundle tied to the electrolier on the right hand side of the hall. So it went.

Each of them had prepared a valentine for every other member of the Club, so each had nine, for Dicky had sent his in to be distributed with the rest. Each had made all his nine of the same sort though not all alike. James, for instance, had made prettily decorated boxes and filled them with candy. Tom, who had a knack at cutting paper, had cut lacy designs out of lily white barred paper which he mounted on colored cardboard, and out of thin colored sheets whose patterns were thrown into relief by a background of white. Ethel Blue had drawn comical Cupids, each performing an acrobatic act. Ethel Brown had baked heart-shaped cookies and tied them into pretty boxes with pink ribbon. Dorothy's knowledge of basket making led her to experiment with some little heart-shaped trays, useful for countless purposes. She made them of different

materials and they proved successful. Della stencilled hearts on to handkerchiefs, decorating some with a border of hearts touching, some with a corner wreath of interlaced hearts, the boys' with a single corner heart large enough for an initial. Each one was different.

Roger's contributions were heart-shaped watch charms of copper, each with a raised initial and mounted on a stray of colored leather and furnished with a bar and snapper of gun metal. Margaret's little heart-shaped pincushions were suitable for boys and girls alike. Some of them were small, for the pocket or the handbag; others were larger and were meant to be placed on the bureau. They were of varied colors, the girls' being of silk to match the colors of their rooms and the boys of darker hues.

Dicky's offerings were woven paper book marks made like Roger's blotter corners and intended to keep the place in a book by slipping over the corner of the leaf. Helen, who had been learning from Dorothy how to model in clay, had attempted paper weights. The family cat had served as a model, and each was a cat in a different position. Some were more successful than others, but, as Roger said, "You'd recognize them as cats."

When the search was over and every one had admired his own and his neighbor's valentines, Ethel Brown recited Hood's sonnet, "For the 14th of February," and Ethel Blue read part of Lamb's essay, "Valentine's Day," and they all felt that Saint Valentine's star was setting and that of the Father of his Country was rising resplendent.

CHAPTER X

ST. PATRICK'S DAY AND THE FIRST OF APRIL

THE Misses Clark had borrowed Elisabeth for the afternoon. It was becoming a custom with them, and as Miss Merriam insisted that her little charge should have her naps out of doors with unbroken regularity, the old ladies found themselves almost every day sitting, rug-enwrapped, on Mrs. Smith's veranda or their own while the baby dozed luxuriously in her carriage. Elisabeth grew pink in the fresh air and if her self-appointed attendants did not do likewise they at least found themselves benefiting by the unaccustomed treatment.

In early March a brother came to visit them. He was a dignified elderly man, "just like the sisters before Elisabeth made them human," Roger declared, "except that he has whiskers a foot long." At first he paid no attention to the child, though the story of its escape from Belgium interested him. But no one resisted Elisabeth long and it was not many days before Mr. Clark was holding his book with one hand and playing ball with the other.

On this particular day Mrs. Smith and Miss Merriam had both needed to go to New York, and the Misses Clark had seized the opportunity to have an unusually long call from Ayleesabet. They had sat on their veranda with her while she napped, but when she came in, fresh and wide awake, their older eyes were growing sleepy from the cold and they went upstairs for forty winks, leaving their nursling in charge of their brother.

Ayleesabet was goodness itself. She sat on the floor and rolled a ball to her elderly playmate, chuckling when it struck the edge of a rug and went out of its course so that he had to plunge after it. She walked around the edge of the same rug, evidently

regarding it as an island to be explored, Crusoe fashion. Her explorations were thorough. If she had been old enough to know what mines were one would have thought that she was playing miner, for she lay on her back, pushed up the rug and rolled under it.

"Upon my word," ejaculated Mr. Clark, adjusting his spectacles and examining the hump made by the baby's round little Belgian body. "Upon my word, that doesn't seem the thing for her to do."

But Elisabeth seemed entirely contented and made no response to the old gentleman's cluckings and other blandishments.

"Come out," he whispered in beguiling tones. "Come out and play."

No answer.

"Come and play horsey. Don't you want to climb up? That's it. Up she goes! Steady now. Hold tight."

As he started on a slow tour of the room on all fours his rider lurched unsteadily.

"Take hold of my collar," cried the aged warhorse.

Ayleesabet fell forward, her arms went around his neck and her hands buried themslves in his whiskers. With a chirrup of delight she righted herself, a bridle-rein of hair in each hand. On went the charger, his speed increasing from a walk to an amble. Louder and louder laughed Elisabeth. Steed and rider were in that perfect accord wherein man seems akin to the Centaur.

At the height of the race the drawing room door opened and in walked Ethel Blue and Ethel Brown Morton. The horse stopped suddenly and wiped his forehead with one of his forefeet, but maintained his horizontal position in order not to throw his rider Elisabeth's equilibrium was somewhat dis-

turbed by the abrupt cessation of her charger's advance but she kept a firm hold on her bridle and restored herself.

"Go, go," she chortled, thumping the prostrate form of Mr. Clark with her slippered feet and smiling with excusable vanity at the new arrivals.

The Ethels stood side by side so stricken with amazement and amusement that for an instant it seemed that apoplexy would overtake them. Thanks to their natural politeness they did not laugh, though they agreed later that it had been the hardest struggle of their lives not to do so.

"We've come to take Ayleesabet home," they said. "It's awfully good of you to entertain her so long."

They lifted the protesting equestrian to the floor and put on her outer garments while the late steed resumed an upright position and dusted his knees.

"A very good child," he observed. "A very intelligent child. She does Miss Merriam great credit."

"She's growing splendidly," replied Ethel Brown.

"Too bad she can't continue under her care. Too bad."

"Can't continue under her care!" repeated the Ethels in unison. "Why can't she? What do you mean?"

"Why, on account of Miss Merriam's leaving. Of course you know. I hope I haven't betrayed any confidence."

"Miss Merriam's leaving!" exclaimed the Ethels as one girl.

"We don't know anything about it!"

"Where is she going?"

"When is she going?"

The questions poured thick and fast and Mr. Clark seemed distinctly taken aback by the excitement he had created.

"Why, Dr. Watkins said that he thought she

wasn't going to stay with Elisabeth much longer. That's what I understood him to say. I don't think I'm mistaken," and the old gentleman passed his hand nervously over the top of his head.

"That's perfectly terrible if it's really so," declared Ethel Blue, who was an especial admirer of Gertrude Merriam's and a devout believer in her ability to turn Elisabeth from a skeleton into a robust little maiden.

"We must find out at once," and Ethel Brown put Elisabeth into her coat with a speed that so disregarded all orderly procedure as to bring a frown to the young Belgian's brow.

The two girls talked about the news in low, horrified tones on the way back to Dorothy's, and down they sat, prepared not only to amuse Elisabeth but to amuse her until the return of Miss Merriam, no matter how late that proved to be.

It seemed an eternity but it was only half past five when she and Mrs. Smith came back. The Ethels sat before the fire in the sitting room like judges on the bench. They made their accusation promptly. Gertrude sat down as if her knees were unable to support her. Her blue eyes stared amazedly from one to the other.

"Mr. Clark says I am going away? That Dr. Watkins said he thought I was going away?"

Her complete wonderment proved her not guilty.

"But I'm not going away! I haven't any idea of going away—unless you want me to," and she turned appealingly to Mrs. Smith.

"My dear child, of course we don't want you to," and Mrs. Smith bent and kissed her. "We love you dearly and we like your work. I can't think what Mr. Clark could have meant—or Dr. Watkins—"

"It was Edward Watkins who told Mr. Clark," repeated Ethel Brown.

Gertrude sat stupefied.

"Unless the wish were father to the thought," ended Mrs. Smith softly.

"Unless he wanted it to be true?" translated Gertrude inquiringly. "Unless— Oh!"

A blush burned its way from her chin to her brow and lost itself in the soft hair that swept back from her temples.

"He wanted it to be true, and he said he thought it was going to happen. Well, he's altogether too sure! It's humiliating," and she threw up her chin and walked firmly out of the room, for the first time forgetting Elisabeth.

"What does she mean?" Ethel Blue asked her aunt.

"Why is she humiliated?" asked Ethel Brown.

"What is she going to do?" was Dorothy's question.

"I don't know," Mrs. Smith replied to Dorothy. "We'd better not bother her. Don't tease her with questions."

The girls obeyed, but they talked the matter over a great deal among themselves and they would have asked Edward Watkins about it the first time they saw him except that their Aunt Louise guessed their plan and forestalled it by telling them that any mention of the matter would be an intrusion upon other people's affairs which would be wholly unwarranted.

The first time they saw Edward was the next day, when the Rosemont Charitable Society gave a bazaar for the benefit of its treasury, depleted by the demands upon it of an uncommonly hard winter. The seats were all taken out of the high school hall and the big room became the scene of a Donnybrook Fair on St. Patrick's Day. Of course the U. S. C. had been called on to help; it had made a name for

itself and outsiders looked to it for ideas and assistance.

In fact, the idea of the fair was Ethel Brown's. She heard her mother talking with one of the Directors of the R. C. S. one afternoon about the unending need for money and suggested the Irish program as a possible means of making some.

"The child is right," fat Mrs. Anderson promptly agreed. "Rosemont never had anything of the sort."

"It wouldn't be harder to get up than any other kind of fair," said Mrs. Morton.

"And St. Patrick's Day will be here so soon that it's a good excuse for hurrying it."

So it had been hurried, and the day after the strange encounter with Mr. Clark and the disturbing conversation with Miss Merriam the scholastic American precincts of the high school were converted into an Irish fair ground. Every one who had anything to do with the tables or the conduct of the bazaar was dressed in an Irish peasant costume, the girls with short, full skirts with plain white shirt waists showing beneath a sleeveless jacket of dark cloth. Heavy low shoes and thick stockings would have been the appropriate wear for the feet, but all the girls rebelled.

"This footgear was meant for the earth floor of a cabin and not for a steam-heated room," declared Helen. "I'll wear green stockings, but thin ones, and my own slippers, even if they aren't suitable."

The boys were less inconvenienced by their garb, which included, to be sure, heavy shoes and long stockings, but also tight knee breeches and, instead of jackets, waistcoats with sleeves.

Every one in Rosemont who had any green furnishings lent them for the occasion. Mrs. Anderson robbed her library of a huge green rug to place before the stationery booth over whose writing

paper and green place-cards and novelties, all in green boxes, she presided robustly.

Mrs. Morton, with Helen and Margaret to assist her, ruled over a table shaped like a shamrock and laden with articles carved from bog oak, and with china animals and photographs of Ireland and of Irish colleens.

Dorothy told fortunes in the lower part of Blarney Castle, built of canvas but sufficiently realistic, in a corner of the hall. On top Tom was ready to hold over the battlements by the heels any one who was "game" for the adventure of kissing the Blarney Stone.

In the restaurant, which was a corner of the hall shut off by screens covered with green paper, Mrs. Anderson superintended the serving of supper by her assistants—Ethel Blue and Della and some of their friends. They offered a hearty meal of Irish stew, or of cold ham and potato salad, followed by pistachio ice cream and small cakes covered with frosting of a delicate green. At one side Ethel Brown controlled the "Murphy Table" and sold huge hot baked Irish potatoes and paper plates of potato salad and crisp potato "chips" ready to be taken home. Before the evening was many minutes old she had so many orders set aside on the shelves that held books in the hall's ordinary state that she had to replenish her stock.

James acted as cashier for the whole room. Roger, armed with a shillelagh, ran around for every one until the time came for him to mount the stage and show what he knew about an Irish jig. Under the coaching of George Foster's sister, he and his sisters had learned it in such an incredibly short time that they were none too sure of their steps, but they managed to get through it without discredit to themselves or their teacher.

Then Mrs. Smith played the accompaniments for a set of familiar Irish songs—"The Harp that once through Tara's Halls," "Erin go Bragh," "Kathleen Mavourneen," "The Wearing of the Green." Dorothy led the choruses, the whole U. S. C., including Dicky, sang their best, and Edward Watkins's tenor rose so pleadingly in "Kathleen Mavourneen" that Mrs. Smith was touched.

"I'm going home now," she said to him, "to stay with the baby so that Gertrude can come to the bazaar. You may go with me if you like."

Edward did like. He glowed with eagerness. He hardly could carry on an intelligent conversation with Mrs. Smith, so eager was he to test the possibilities of the walk back when he should be escorting Miss Merriam.

When they entered the house and he saw her reading before the fire his heart came into his throat, so demure she looked and so lovely.

"I've come home, dear, so that you can go," explained Mrs. Smith. "Dr. Watkins will take you back."

Gertrude had given Mrs. Smith's escort one startled glance as they entered.

"Thank you very much indeed," she answered. "You are always so thoughtful. But I'm not going out again tonight. It's quite out of the question; please don't urge me," and she left the room without a look at the disappointed face of the young doctor.

"Now, what does that mean?" he inquired in amazement.

"You ought to know."

"I don't know. Do you?"

"I think I do."

"Won't you tell me?"

"If you think over any conversations you have had

recently about Miss Merriam perhaps it will come to you."

"And you won't tell me?"

"I may be a wrong interpreter. At any rate I'm not an interferer. Your affairs are your own."

"That's a very slender hint you've given me, but I'll do my best with it."

His best was of small avail. Miss Merriam would not see him when he called, did not go anywhere where she would be likely to meet him, bowed to him so coldly when she passed him one day going into the house, that he actually did not have the courage to stop her, but rang the bell and asked for Mrs. Smith.

The Ethels and Dorothy felt that the part of courtesy was to preserve a civil silence, but they were consumed with curiosity to know just what was going on. Certainly Miss Gertrude was not happy, for she often looked as if she had been weeping, and certainly Dr. Watkins was wretched, for Tom and Della quite immediately reported him as being "so solemn you can't do anything with him." Indeed, at the April Fool party which the Hancocks gave to the U. S. C., he indulged in an outburst that startled them all.

Margaret and James had asked him because the Club had formed the habit of doing so when they were undertaking anything special. The Ethels were quite right when they guessed that he accepted the invitation because he hoped to see Miss Merriam there. She did not go, offering as an excuse that Ayleesabet needed her.

The April Fool party might have been named the Party of Surprises. There were no practical jokes; —"a joke of the hand is a joke of the vulgar" had been trained into all of them from their earliest days;—but there were countless surprises. The

opening of a candy box disclosed a toy puppy; a toy cat was filled not with the desired candy but with popcorn. The candy was handed about in the brass coal scuttle, beautifully polished and lined with paraffin paper. Each guest received a present. A string of jet beads proved to be small black seeds, and a necklace of green jade resolved itself on inspection into a collar of green string beans strung by one end so that they lay at length like a verdant fringe.

The early evening was spent in the dining-room—no one knew why. When supper was served in the library it became evident that it was just a part of the program to have everything topsy turvy. It was evident, too, that a raid had been made on Dr. Hancock's supplies, for the lemonade was served in test tubes and the Charlotte Russe in pill boxes.

It was after supper when Edward Watkins had grown sure that Miss Merriam surely was not coming that he indulged in a burst of sarcasm. After a consultation with Margaret he drew the curtains across the door leading into the hall.

"Are you ready?" he called to Margaret.

"Yes," came in reply.

"Then here, my friends, you see the portrait of the original April Fool."

He swept back the portière and the laughing group, silenced by the energy of his announcement, saw Edward himself reflected in a mirror that Margaret had set up on a chair. They all laughed, but it was uneasy laughter, and Tom tried to reassure his brother by clapping him on the shoulder and exclaiming, "You do yourself an injustice, old man, you really do," with a touch of earnestness in it.

CHAPTER XI

APRIL 19 AND 23

ETHEL BLUE took no part in the historical program that Helen put on the stage of the Glen Point Orphanage on April 19th, "Patriots' Day," when Massachusetts folk celebrated the Revolutionary battle of Concord and Lexington. The reason was that she was just getting over a cold that had come upon her at the very time when the others were making ready for the performance, and had made her feel so wretched that she could do nothing outside of her school work. This was how it happened that she was sitting at the rear of the room when Edward Watkins came in, looked searchingly over the audience and then slipped into a chair beside her.

"Miss Merriam not here?" he murmured under cover of a duet that Dorothy and Della were playing on the piano.

"No."

"Do you know why she won't speak to me?"

Ethel Blue fairly trembled. What was she to say? She had been warned not to interfere in other people's affairs. Yet she did not know how to answer without telling the truth. So she said:

"I know how it began—her getting mad with you. I don't understand why."

"How did it begin?"

Ethel Blue looked about wildly. Dorothy and Della were thumping away vigorously. There was no possibility for escape.

"Mr. Clark told us—Ethel Brown and me—that you said you thought Miss Merriam was going away soon. We were wild, because we love her so—"

There was a strange mumble from the Doctor.

—"and she's so splendid with Ayleesabet. We

asked her the minute we saw her if she was going away. She said she hadn't any idea of it and she asked us how we came to think so, and we told her what Mr. Clark had said."

"Great Scott! What did she say then?"

"Oh, Miss Gertrude and Aunt Louise said, 'why should Edward have said such a thing?' And Aunt Louise said, 'unless he wanted it to be true'."

"Ah, your Aunt Louise is a woman of intelligence!"

Edward smiled, though somewhat miserably. Ethel Blue was warming to her subject.

"Miss Gertrude said you were too sure and it was humiliating, and she went up stairs and she's never been the same since then. I don't know why it was humiliating, but she was angry right through."

"I've noticed that," said Edward reminiscently. "Now let me see just what she meant. She was told that I said I thought she was going away soon. 'Thought' or 'hoped'?"

"'Thought.' Did you say it?"

"And your Aunt Louise said that I must have wanted it to be true," went on Edward slowly, unheeding Ethel Blue's question. "And Gertrude—Miss Merriam said I was too sure and that it was humiliating. Is that straight?"

"Yes. Did you say it?"

Ethel Blue was beginning to think that if she was giving so much information she ought to be given a little in return.

"Do you know what I think about it?" asked Edward, again ignoring Ethel's question. "I don't wonder a bit that she was as mad as hops. Any girl would have been."

"Why?"

"Do you really want me to tell you? Well," con-

tinued Edward in her ear, "I dare say you've guessed that I'm in love with Miss Merriam."

Ethel drew a deep breath and stared open-mouthed at Dr. Watkins, who nodded at her gravely.

"I love her very much, and one day she was especially kind to me and I went walking down the street like a peacock and plumped right on to Mr. Clark. We walked along together and he said something about Miss Merriam, and I was jackass enough to say that I hoped—not *thought*, Ethel Blue, but *hoped*; do you see the difference?"

Ethel Blue nodded.

"I *hoped* that before long she would leave Rosemont. Don't you see, Ethel Blue? I said it out of the fullness of my heart because I hoped that before long she would marry me and go away."

Ethel gasped again.

"I was riding such a high horse that I hardly knew what I said, but I can see that when that was repeated to her with 'thought' instead of 'hoped' it looked as if I was mighty sure she was going to have me, and I had'nt even asked her. Yes, any girl would be indignant, wouldn't she?"

Edward scanned Ethel's face, hoping to find some comfort there, but there was none. Ethel's discomfiture and bewilderment had passed and she was putting an unusually acute mind on the situation. She understood perfectly that it looked to Miss Gertrude as if Dr. Watkins had made so sure that she returned his affection that he had gone about talking of it to strangers even before he had told her of his own love.

"I don't wonder that she felt humiliated," was Ethel's verdict.

The program on the stage was going on swiftly. Helen had made the historical introduction, telling

the circumstances that led to the affair of April 19th. Tom had recited "Paul Revere's Ride."

It was while the whole Club was singing some quaint Revolutionary songs and winding up with "Yankee Doodle" that Dr. Watkins made his appeal to Ethel Blue.

"She won't listen to a word from me," he said. "She won't let me speak to her. Do you think you could find a chance to tell her how it was? It was bad enough but it wasn't as bad as she thinks. Will you tell her I'd like to apologize before I go to Oklahoma?"

"Oklahoma!"

"A friend of Dr. Hancock's is settled in a flourishing town there. He has a bigger practice than he can attend to, and he sent East for Dr. Hancock to find him an assistant. He has offered the chance to me."

"But it's so far away!"

"I hesitated a long while on that account. You see I didn't know whether Miss Merriam would care for the West."

"Weren't you taking a good deal for granted?"

"You're finding me guilty just as she has. But of course a man has to think about what he has to offer a wife. I suppose you think I'm queer to talk about this with you," he broke off his story to say, "but I haven't said a word about it to any one and it has been driving me wild so it's a great relief if you'll let me talk."

Ethel nodded.

"You see, my practice in New York is so small it's ridiculous. You can't ask a girl to marry you when you aren't making enough money to support even yourself. But suppose I should go to Oklahoma where I shall soon make a good living, and then come

back and ask her, and find out that she hates the West. Don't you see that I'm not all to blame?"

"Perhaps she wouldn't like you enough to marry you no matter where you lived," suggested Ethel.

Edward heaved a sigh that seemed to come from his very boots and leaned back weakly in his chair.

"There's a certain brutal frankness about you, Ethel Blue, that I never suspected."

"I thought you were thinking about all sides of the question," Ethel defended herself.

"Um, yes. I suppose I must admit that there is that possibility. Any way (if you'll try to get her to let me talk to her I'll be grateful to you evermore," and Edward got up and strolled away to compliment the participants in the program, leaving Ethel Blue more excited than she had ever been in her life, even just before she went up in an aeroplane, because she was touching the edges of an adventure in real life.

It was embarrassing to broach the subject to Miss Merriam. She was sweetness itself, but she was dignified to a degree that forbade any encroachment upon her private affairs, and twice when Ethel Blue's lips were actually parted to plead in Edward's behalf her courage failed her.

"Mr. Clark is deaf," said Ethel Blue abruptly. "Edward Watkins didn't say he 'thought' you were going away; he said he 'hoped' you were going away."

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Gertrude, turning a startled face toward Ethel.

"He hoped so because he loves you and he wants to ask you to marry him but he can't until he has a good practice, and he doesn't know whether you would like Oklahoma."

"Whether I'd like Oklahoma!" repeated Gertrude slowly.

"He wants to explain it all to you but you won't

let him speak to you. He's had a good practice offered him in Oklahoma, but he won't go if you don't like Oklahoma; he'll try to work up a practice here, but it will take such a long time."

"Ethel Blue, do you really know what you're talking about?"

"Yes, Miss Gertrude," replied Ethel, blushing uncomfortably, but keeping on with determination. "Please don't think I'm awful, 'butting in' like this. Dr. Watkins asked me to ask you to let him see you. He tried a long time without telling any one; he told me when he couldn't think of anything else to do. He didn't really know why you were mad until I told him; he just knew you wouldn't see him when he called."

Miss Gertrude's eyes were on her fragile pink work as Ethel Blue blundered on.

"What shall I tell him?" she said, breaking the silence.

"You may tell him," said Gertrude slowly, "that I have a school friend in Oklahoma who tells me that Oklahoma is a very good place to live."

Ethel Blue clapped her hands noiselessly.

"But tell him, also," Gertrude went on, her blue eyes stern, "that I shall be too busy to see him before he goes."

"Oh, Miss Gertrude!" ejaculated Ethel, disappointed. "I don't quite know whether you care or not."

"Neither do I," replied Gertrude, and she leaned over and kissed Ethel Blue with lips that smiled sadly.

CHAPTER XII

WEST POINT

ETHEL BLUE gave Gertrude Merriam's message to Edward Watkins who was as much puzzled by it as she had been.

"What does she mean?" he asked. "Does she care for me or doesn't she?"

"She doesn't know herself. I asked her."

Edward whistled a long, soft whistle.

"Aren't girls the queerest things ever made!" he ejaculated in wonder.

"I don't think it's queer," defended Ethel. "First, it was all guesswork with her because you never had told her that you cared. And then she was angry at your having talked *about* her when you hadn't talked *to* her. Her feelings were hurt badly. And now she doesn't know what she does feel."

"She isn't strong against Oklahoma, anyway. I guess I'll accept that offer."

Ethel Blue nodded.

"I want to tell you one thing more before you go," she said. "I haven't told any one a word about this, even Ethel Brown. It's the first thing in all my life I haven't told Ethel Brown."

"I suspect it's been pretty hard for you not to. You know I appreciate it. If things work out as I hope, it will be you who have helped me most," and he shook hands with her very seriously. "There's one thing more I wish you'd do for me," he pleaded.

Ethel Blue nodded assent.

"If I can."

"I know you Club people will be hanging May baskets on May Day morning. Will you hang this one on Miss Gertrude's door—the door of her room, so that there won't be any mistake about her getting it?"

"Certainly I will."

"It's just a little note to say 'good-bye.' See, you can read it."

"I don't want to," responded Ethel Blue stoutly, though it was hard to let good manners prevail over a desire to see the inside of the very first letter she had ever seen the outside of to know as the writing of a lover to his lass.

"You'd better tell your Aunt Marian that I've told you all this," he went on. "I shouldn't want her to think that I was asking you to do something underhand."

"She wouldn't think it of you. She likes you."

"Tell her about it all, neverthless. I insist."

Ethel felt relieved. It had seemed queer to be doing something that no one knew about.

"Thank you," she said.

The May basket was duly hung, and Miss Gertrude's eyes wore the traces of tears all the rest of the day, but Ethel Blue was not to learn for a long time what was in the note.

May passed swiftly. All the boys were so busy studying that they could give but little time to Club meetings and there was nothing done beyond the making of some plans for the summer and the taking of a few long walks. The Ethels and Dorothy and Della were doing their best to make a superlative record, also. With Helen and Margaret life went more easily, for graduation days were yet two years off with them.

CHAPTER XIII

GRADUATION AND FOURTH OF JULY

WITH the coming of June thoughts of graduation filled the minds of all the prospective graduates. The boys were able to get through their examinations quite early in the month, and as they all did better than they expected the last days of the month were days of joy to them. The girls had to wait longer to have the weight removed from their minds, but they, too, passed their examinations well enough to earn special congratulation from the principals of their respective schools.

The graduation exercises of the Rosemont graded schools were held in the hall of the high school and all the schools were represented there. The Ethels and Dorothy all sang in the choruses, and each one of them had a part in the program. Ethel Brown described the character of Northern France and Belgium, the land in which the war was being carried on. Although no mention of the war was allowed every one listened to this unusual geography lesson with extreme interest. Ethel Blue recited a poem on "Peace" and Dorothy sang a group of folk songs of different countries. It was all very simple and unpretentious, and they were only three out of a dozen or more who tried to give pleasure to the assembled parents and guardians.

Roger's graduation was more formal. A speaker came out from New York, a man of affairs who had an interest in education and who liked to say a word of encouragement to young people about to step from one stage of their education into another.

"Of course education never ends as long as you live," Roger said thoughtfully to Ethel Brown, "but there is a big feeling of jump when you go from one school to another, and you can't deny it."

"I don't want to deny it," retorted Ethel Brown. "I'm all full of excitement at the idea of going into the high school next autumn."

The graduating class of the high school was going to inaugurate a plan for the decoration of the high school hall. They were to have a banner which was to be used at all the functions connected with graduation and in after years was to be carried by any of the alumni who came back for the occasion of the graduation and alumni dinner. During the year this banner and those which should follow it were to be stacked in the hall, their handsome faces encouraging the scholars who should see them every day by the thought that their school was a place in which every one who had passed through was interested. The power of a body of interested alumni is a force worth having by any school.

The graduating class found the idea of the banner most attractive, but when it came to the making they were aghast at the expense. A committee examined the prices at places in New York where such decorations were made and returned horrified.

It was then that the Ethels offered to do their best to help out the Class of 1915.

"We'll do what we can, and I know Helen and Margaret and Della will help us," they said and fell to work.

Ethel Blue drew the design and submitted it to the class and to the principal of the school. With a few alterations they approved it. The girls had seen many banners at Chautauqua and they had talked with the ladies who had made the banner of their mother's class, so that they were not entirely ignorant of the work they were laying out for themselves. Nevertheless, they profited by the experience of others and did not have to try too many experiments themselves.

They had learned, for instance, that they must secure their silk from a professional banner-making firm, for the silk of the department store was neither wide enough nor of a quality to endure the hard wear that a banner must endure. From this same banner house they bought linen canvas to serve as interlining for both the front and the back of the banner.

Several tricks that were of great help to them they had jotted down when they discussed banner making at Chautauqua and now they were more than ever glad that they had the notebook habit.

The front of their banner was to be white and to bear the letters "R. H. S." for Rosemont High School, and below it "1915." They remembered that in padding the lettering they must make it stand high in order to look effective, but they must never work it tight or it would draw. Another point worth recalling was that while the banner was still in the embroidery frame and was held taut they should put flour paste on the back of the embroidery to replace the pressing which was not possible with letters raised so high.

When it came to putting the banner together they found that their work was not easy or near its end. They cut the canvas interlining just like the outside, and then turned back the edge of the canvas. This was to prevent the roughness cutting through the silk when that should be turned over the canvas. Back and front were stitched and the edges pressed separately, and then they were laid back to back and were stitched together. The row of machine stitching was covered by gimp.

A heavy curtain pole tipped with a gilt ball served as a standard and was much cheaper than the pole offered by the professionals. The cross bar tipped at each end by gilt balls, was fastened to the pole by

a brass clamp. The banner itself was held evenly by being laced on to the crossbar.

The cord had been hard to find in the correct shade and the girls had been forced to buy white and have it dyed. A handsome though worn pair of curtain tassels which they found in Grandmother Emerson's attic had been re-covered with finer cord of the same color. The entire effect was harmonious and the work was so shipshape as to call forth the admiration of Mr. Wheeler and all the teachers who had a private view on the day when it was finished. The girls were mightily proud of their achievement.

"It has been one of the toughest jobs I ever undertook," declared Ethel Brown, "but I'm glad to do it for Roger and for the school."

With the graduation past all Rosemont, young and old, gave their attention to preparing for a safe and sane Fourth of July. Of course the U. S. C. were as eager as any not only to share in the fun but to help in the work.

One piece of information was prominently advertised; it was a method of rendering children's garments fire-proof. "If garments are dipped in a solution of ammonium phosphate in the proportion of one pound to a gallon of cold water, they are made fire-proof," read a leaflet that was handed in at every house in the town. "Ammonium phosphate costs but 25 cents a pound," it went on. "A family wash can be rendered fire-proof at an expense of 15 cents a week."

The U. S. C. boys handed out hundreds of these folders when they went about among the business men and arranged for contributions for the celebration. The girls took charge of the patriotic tableaux that were to be given on the steps of the high

school, with the onlookers gathered on the green where the Christmas tree and the Maypole had stood.

"We must have large groups," said Helen. "In the first place the Rosemonters must be getting tired of seeing us time after time, and in the next place this is a community affair and the more people there are in it the more interested the townspeople will be."

The selection of the people who would be suitable and the inviting of them to take part required many visits and much explanation, but the U. S. C. had learned to be thorough and there was no neglect, no leaving of matters until the last minute in the hope that "it will come out right."

"It seems funny not to be waked up at an unearthly hour by a fierce racket," commented Roger on the morning of the Fourth. "I'm not quite sure that I like it."

"That's because you've always helped make the racket. As you grow older you'll be more and more glad every year that there isn't anything to rouse you to an earlier breakfast on Fourth of July morning."

The family ate the morning meal in peace and then prepared for the procession that was to gather in the square. This procession was to be different from the Labor Day procession, which was one advertising the trades and occupations of Rosemont. Today was a day for history, and the floats were to represent episodes in the town's history. Roger was to be an Indian, George Foster one of the early Swedish settlers, and Gregory Patton a Revolutionary soldier. None of the girls were to be on the floats. The procession was to be given over to the men and boys.

It was long and as each float had been carefully arranged and the figures strikingly posed the whole effect was one that gave great pleasure to all who saw it.

A community luncheon followed on the green. Tables were set on the grass, and the girls from every part of town unpacked baskets and laid cloths and waited on the guests who came to this new form of picnic quite as if they never had ceased to do these agreeable neighborly acts.

The girls had tired feet after all their running around, but they rested for an hour and were fresh again when it was time for the tableaux as the sun was sinking.

The high school was approached by a wide flight of steps and on these Helen posed her scenes. The people below sat on the grass in the front rows and stood at the back. The floats of the morning had been scenes of local history. These were scenes from the life of Washington. Washington, the young surveyor, strode into the woods with his companions and his Indian attendants. Washington became commander-in-chief of the Continental army. Washington crossed the Delaware—and the U. S. C. boys were glad that they had built the *Jason* at the Glen Point orphanage and did not have to study out the entire construction anew. Washington and Lafayette and Steuben shook hands in token of eternal friendship. Washington reviewed his troops under an elm at Cambridge. Washington suffered with his ragged men at Valley Forge. Then Cornwallis surrendered, and last of all, the great general bade farewell to his officers and retired to the private life from which he was soon to be summoned to take the presidential chair.

There were a hundred people in the various pic-

tures, but the winter's experiences had taught the Club so much that they found no trouble in managing the whole affair. Each person had been made responsible for furnishing his costumes, a sketch of which had been made for him by Ethel Blue, and every one was appropriately dressed.

"This is another success for you young people," exclaimed Mr. Wheeler, shaking hands with them all. "I always know where to go when I want help."

Ethel Blue walked home with Miss Merriam, who was wheeling Elisabeth. She seemed much gayer than she had been for a long time.

Ethel kissed her as well as her sleepy little charge as she went into the house to put on a warmer dress before she should go out in the evening to see the community fireworks.

"You and Elisabeth are my helpers," she whispered gratefully. "You make everybody happy—except, perhaps—"

Ethel hesitated, for Gertrude had never mentioned Edward to her since he left for Oklahoma.

"Do you want to know what was in my May basket?"

Ethel clasped her hands.

"Oh, yes!"

Gertrude took out of her cardcase a tattered bit of paper. It read: "When you know that you really like Oklahoma and all the people there, please telegraph me. Good-bye."

"I telegraphed this morning," she said, almost shyly. "I said 'Oklahoma interests me'."

"Here comes the telegraph boy down the street now," cried Ethel.

Gertrude took the yellow envelope from him, and,

before she opened it, signed the book painstakingly. When she had read the message she handed it to Ethel Blue.

"I start for Rosemont on the tenth to investigate the truth of the rumor."

Gertrude bubbled joyously.

"Oh!" exclaimed Ethel Blue softly. "That means you're engaged!"

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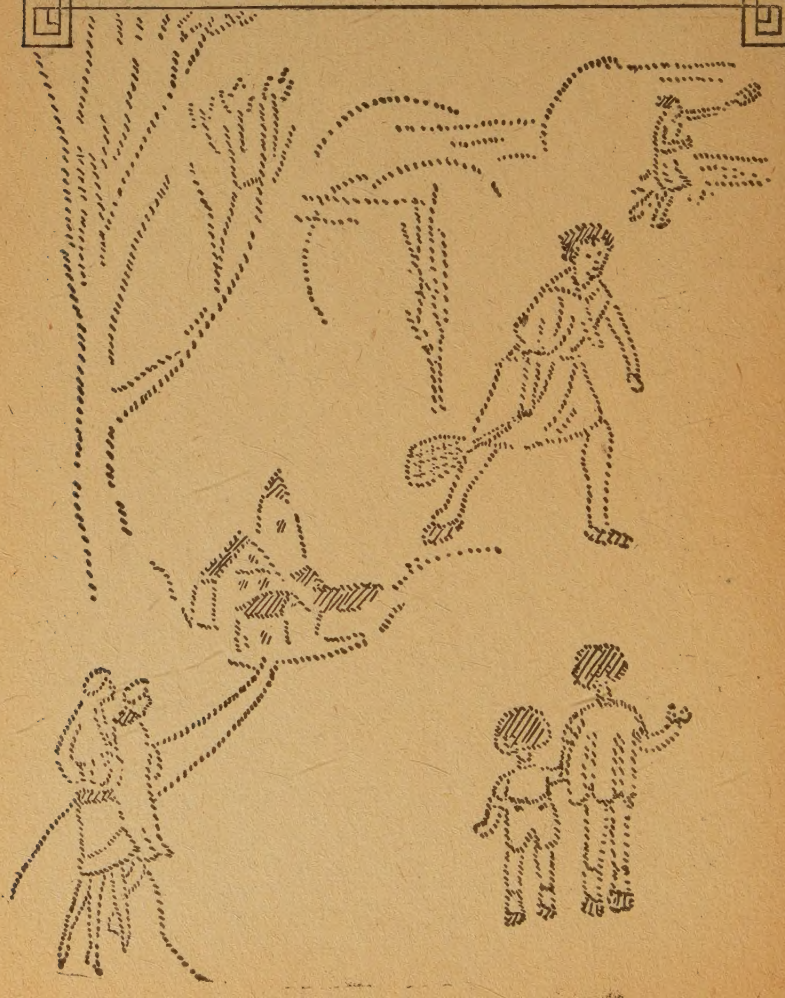

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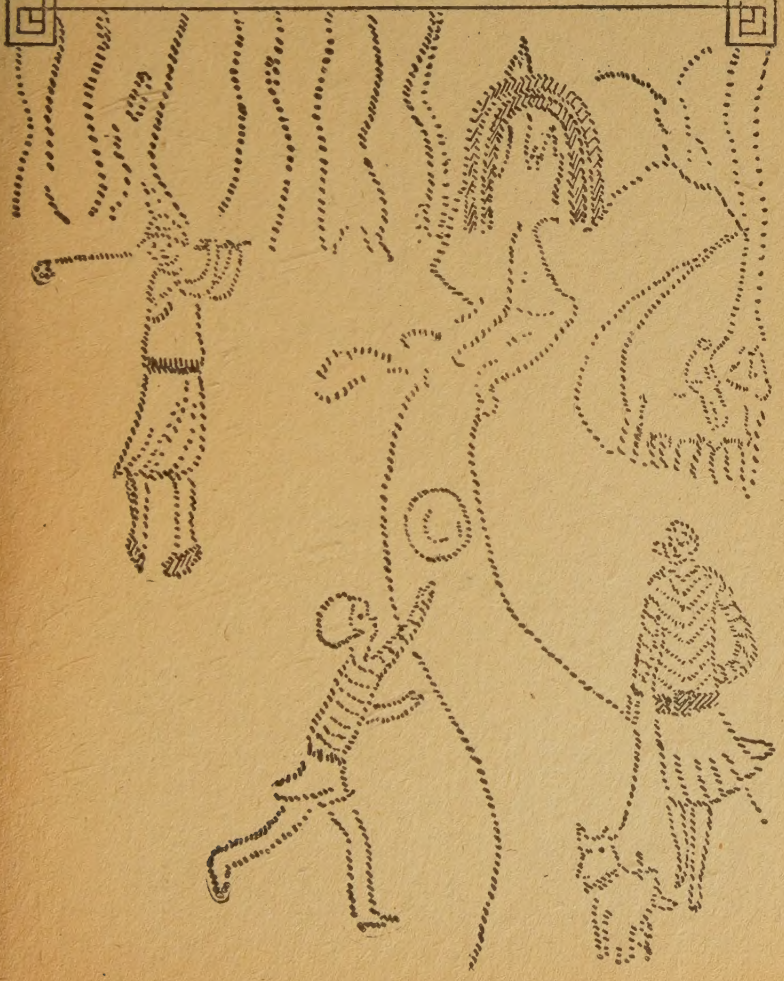

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